

**NIHILISM, COSMETICS
and AUDACITY
(Dandyism
& Dorian Gray)**

...being a thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in English in the

University of Canterbury

by Simon Taylor.

University of Canterbury

-1990-

Annushka

i Tatyana.

acknowledging
the assistance
of
Dr. Denis Walker

abstract

This thesis presents a study of dandyism with reference to Oscar Wilde and Dorian Gray in the form of a comparative analysis. It provides a critique of the social and cultural theories of dandyism of Ellen Moers, Sima Godfrey, Carter Ratcliff, in relation to the dandyified views of Charles Baudelaire and Barbey D'Aurevilly. It establishes a philosophical tradition of dandyism, bearing on the positions of Jacques Derrida, and on Jean Baudrillard's characterization of postmodernity. Employing the ideas of Walter Benjamin and Andrew Ross, it puts the thesis of the dandy as a point of confluence between fashion and philosophy, ethics and æsthetics.

*matters of style,
modes of contents:*

*A Foreword to
Nihilism, Cosmetics and Audacity:
A Study on the dandyism of Oscar Wilde
and his creature.*

I

The Feint and the Parry, An Historical Flourish puts pay to the conventional view of dandyism as epochal. Dandyism initiates a cultural logic of internal opposition through irony and deliberate inconsequentiality. Camp, pop and kitsch, among other categories of taste, perpetuate this general strategy and that specific to the dandyism of Oscar Wilde, the parry. (pp. 1-14)

II

the art world goes pop shows Regency dandyism, in a privileged relation to the aristocracy, becomes Wilde's dandyism, in a privileged relation to the art world. The dandy approaches the status of artist; dandyism is assimilated to art. The chief concern of the dandyfied artwork is to communicate to a cultural élite through a strategy of opposition. (pp. 15-21)

III

in which the dandy makes camp is a snapshot of a changing sexual and political constituency. The dandy plays his part in the rise of the New Woman.

Wilde's homosexuality conduces to an æsthetics in sympathy with same-sex love. (pp. 22-38)

IV

the beautiful secret comprises a partial synopsis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* articulated around the thematics of secrecy. In the dandyism of Dorian Gray æsthetics supplant ethics, alluding to the postmodern scenario of politics and desire, the popular theory of the spectacle, the specular, the speculum. What is disclosed in what is represented in *Dorian Gray* is contingent on what is kept secret: a function of dandyism, rather than of the psyche or its linguistic orientation. The secret is the self-consciousness of the dandy and the dandyified in a dialectical relation to dandyism's thoroughgoing moral opposition. (pp. 39-78)

V

in which non-entity strikes an attitude: for the dandy and the dandyified, æsthetics are both a formal mode and mode of content: dandyism exceeds purely material representation by declaring the metaphysical an art and art of the self. (pp.79-100)

VI

foil, counterfoil, messrs. Wilde and Gray: a contention, the dandy's opposition to nihilism constitutes his audacity. (pp. 101-107)

VII

L'Imprévu the unforeseen, at once, opens the history of dandyism onto the possibility of future

dandies, and installs itself as a characteristic of the specificity of a dandiacal attitude. (pp.108-111)

Nihilism, Cosmetics and Audacity adopts a dandiacal stance and presents such matters of style as are from time to time adequate to its modes of contents.¹



Albrechtus Durerus Noricus
ipsum me propriis sic effin-
gebam coloribus quibus
anno MCCC.

VI SELF-PORTRAIT Munich, Alte Pinakothek
Whole (49 cm.)

see note 2

I

The Feint and the Parry,

an Historical Flourish.

In the conventional view of the history of dandyism, George Brummell is the first dandy, the first fully acknowledged Man of Fashion. He flourishes at the turn of the eighteenth century and is renowned in Regency high society for his assiduous application to appearances, to social etiquette and to fashion. He is not an aristocrat by birth, but a man who utilizes his talent for winning favour through a mastery of social grace in order to transcend his humble origins. "Whoever heard of George Brummell's father?" Lady Hester is reported to have said to him one day. "Ah, Lady Hester," he replied, "who, indeed, ever heard of George B's father, and who would have ever heard of George B himself, if he had been anything but what he is?"³ Neither is he entirely a parasite on or flunky of the aristocracy, or its fool, since he epitomizes its ideals of education, beauty and manners. So he is emulated by the social-climbing middle-classes for his self-made quality and by the aristocracy for his high degree of cultivation. In a particular sense he is superior to the aristocracy for being slightly apart from it and capitalizes on this slight distance which makes him 'better'. He is, etymologically, at least, an aristocrat: the aristocratic bachelor who lives his life in the mirror of his self-cultivation and is immortalized in countless stories and novels,

perhaps most notably in Barbey D'Aurevilly's *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell*.⁴

Brummell's posthumous fame has been assured him by the anecdotal material elaborated around him, inspired by the myth of the Beau - as he was known - the first dandy. For instance, the Beau lights a ten-pound note to help a banker find a coin he has dropped in the street. Like Oscar Wilde, the anecdotes surrounding him are numerous, and like Geoffrey Palmer, half the lies said about him are untrue. Unlike Wilde, however, Beau Brummell has few bon mots (he is less a literary creature), his talent in the area being largely restricted to the perfect timing of his arrogant or audacious utterances and acts. He is not loquacious, but ironic. Despite the dandy's punctiliousness in matters of etiquette he transgresses its codes so as to win favour with his assertions of a self-mocking superiority. Again in conversation with Lady Hester, for example, Brummell says, "If I did not impertinently stare duchesses out of countenance, and nod over my shoulder to a prince, I should be forgotten in a week: and, if the world is so silly as to admire my absurdities, you and I may know better, but what does that signify."⁵

The most fundamental fact about the dandyism of George Brummell is that he is the inventor of the starched neck-cloth. This is fundamental for two reasons: Firstly, and most importantly, it is a mark of his originality, in that he is remembered for this innovation: secondly, it is a mark of his lack of originality, in that his

invention of the starched neck-cloth appears trivial, superfluous, not a true innovation, and incidental to the 'March of History'. These two reasons supplement each other in a logic that came to be called modern, since, as it was theorized by later proponents of dandyism (especially Barbey D'Aurevilly and Charles Baudelaire), it consists in an inversion of the artistic innovation or novelty over the significant facts and acts of utilitarian histories. Brummell's invention is *remembered*, and therefore is victorious over histories that value only public works, great men, national and international conflicts. The moment of this inversion and victory of the banal neck-cloth over the profound concerns of history is the dandiacal moment par excellence. It is first and foremost the dandy's victory, so that Lord Byron could name Brummell as, ironically (he himself learnt much from the Beau's example), the *greatest* man of the nineteenth century, placing Napoleon second, and Lord Byron third.⁶ The dandiacal inversion exemplified for the artists of the nineteenth century and beyond, for the artists of modernity, who often self-consciously exploited and promoted the stance of the dandy, a position that could simultaneously mock the conventions of modern capitalist society even as it was implicated within it.

If to us today the dandiacal inversion seems almost a commonplace, inured as we are by the similar inversions and reversals of camp, kitsch and pop, this is because of a cultural logic that the dandy first instantiates and that these marginal

categories of taste perpetuate. Ellen Moers writes, "the dandy's distinction was to be apparent only to the initiate."⁷ Due to the continuing influence of the dandy over popular consciousness, we are, in a sense, all initiates.

Oscar Wilde writes in his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that dandyism "is an attempt to assert the absolute modernity of beauty" and that fashion is that "by which what is really fantastic becomes for a moment universal".⁸ As far as George Brummell is concerned, this translates roughly as: the Beau asserts the absolute modernity of beauty by making what is really fantastic - the starched neck-cloth - become universal, become fashion. It should be added that the moment of the neck-cloth, or *Neckclothitania* as it was called,⁹ was indeed fantastic in that it imposed on the wearer a rigidity of the neck whereby if he turned his head he could cut his ear.¹⁰ The Beau is the first dandy or Man of Fashion because he is a trend-setter, a maker of taste. He is a Man of Fashion, with capitalization, because in his person fashion ceases to be various and multiple and becomes singular and dandiacal. The dandy personifies and is an arbiter of taste, not through appropriation, but through an act of audacity, such as the donning of the starched neck-cloth.

But I have already departed from the conventional view of the history of dandyism, since by making Beau Brummell an instance of dandyism and personification of fashion I have claimed for the dandy more than would conventionally be allowed. This view, as presented by Ellen Moers in

her *The Dandy*, posits a neat historical epoch that begins and is at its most refulgent with the figure of Brummell, and that after Brummell enters a decline characterized by a series of refractions and diffusions of the dandy ideal. For this view, Brummell is not only the first dandy, he is the full dandy against whose perfection all others must be judged and found wanting. He is really the only dandy since all others are his followers and their dandyism consists merely in a retrospective reading of and annotation on the ideal he sets in place. Moers also usefully sets the short life and lingering death of dandyism within the context of an embourgeoisement and growth of commercialism in the nineteenth century; the dandy's relation to capital, specifically his increasing complicity with commercial forms and popular culture, signifies for her a gradual loss of purity and integrity. And in the context of the changing relationship between the sexes; the appearance of the New Woman at the end of the nineteenth century effects a crisis-point in the history of the dandy and is ultimately his downfall since it entails the loss of an identity already made anaemic by commerce and defined and played out on the borders of preexisting sexual stereotypes. For Moers, by the time of the fin de siècle and the "New Dandyism" of Wilde, Beardsley, Beerbohm and the Rhymers' Club, dandyism has reached its nadir, its most authentic statement is the recognition of its moribundity, the irrevocability of its past glory.

To consider the dandy as a popular ideal, to consider his role in relation to fashion and popular taste, as an integral fact of his existence, rather than as incidental to it or as threatening his status in society, is to problematize the account of the history of dandyism as a history of the dandy's decline. The fact of the Beau's popularity, at least during his lifetime, as a model for both low-brow and high-brow emulation, suggests the need for an account less historically specific, less class-biased, less grounded in a single dandiacal biography. The possibility of such an alternative account is already latent in the conventional view where it seeks to adumbrate a tradition of dandyism and allude to its general traits apart from the specific characteristics of Beau Brummell. One such sketch describes the tradition as resting on a "worship of the town and the artificial; grace, elegance, the art of the pose, sophistication and the mask."¹¹ There are of course problems with the general applicability of such a definition, for the reason that dandyism is not a collection of general traits, nor the sum total of what has been said about it; it is not primarily a discursive formation. The tradition fails insofar as it is not a history, invested with the particulars of the dandy's stance in relation to his milieu; the history fails insofar as it is not a tradition, able to be generalized as dandy-ism and able to assimilate the contrarities of successive dandiacal strategies. What concerns us here is the general nature of the dandy's stance, the specific strategies employed to achieve and maintain that stance, and the

specificity or specialization of the stance as constituting dandyism.

To use the metaphor of fencing, a sport that reiterates the need for correct posture or stance in order to gain victory over an opponent, George Brummell is the feint: His is a cleverly articulated ruse designed to provoke by dissembling an attack on his opponent. Oscar Wilde, the fin de siècle dandy, is the parry: His is the, of necessity, more elaborate art of indirection that turns aside the thrusts of his opponent by adopting a series of positions. The Beau is perhaps still the first dandy because of the originality of his ruse, which is the pose of a threat and therefore poses a threat before it is in turn threatened. Wilde has, so he says, three souls, the one in contemplation of the other two.¹² His dandyism opposes a threat by placing his positions in opposition. The dandiacal feint is paradoxically direct, placing the dandy directly at risk (for his dandyism); the dandiacal parry places the dandy indirectly at risk. The latter's dandyism is also and at once a use of dandyism, and because the conventional view sees it as therefore at one remove it deems it the weaker and lesser of the two strategies. However, both the feint and the parry are strategies of opposition.

Following the death of the Regency dandy, in 1840, the turn in the history of dandyism comes in the form of Barbey D'Aurevilly's 1845 biography of Brummell, *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell*. This work draws out the anti-bourgeois implications of the Beau's stance. It reformulates his opposition and in so doing makes available to

subsequent followers of the dandy tradition a new form of dandyism, called by Ellen Moers, intellectual dandyism. A shift in emphasis occurs in Barbey's work providing a notion of the dandy that is given its extreme statement in Albert Camus's identification of the dandy with the revolutionary. It is a shift away from the reading given in the most significant biography of Brummell before Barbey, by William Jesse, which afforded to the early Victorian reader substantial opportunity to moralize on the emptiness and frivolity of Brummell's life since over half the biography was devoted to the Beau's mental and physical decay - just punishment for his sins - upon his exile to France. For Barbey, the greatness of the dandy is irrefutable and derives solely from his complete commitment to being a dandy. His supposed 'emptiness and frivolity' becomes an embodiment of anti-vulgarity as he opposes with his refinement the "materialistic civilization of the bourgeois century" and resists with his wit and style vulgar moralization.¹³ *Du Dandysme* abstracted from the lived ideal of dandyism what could be reused as a model of intellectual opposition. It took from the English experience and gave to the French intelligentsia a general strategy of critique, the appeal of which lay in its originality, contrasted by Barbey to contemporary French mediocrity, and in its foreignness. *Du Dandysme* initiated a cross-Channel cross-fertilization of ideas that in England revitalized waning popular interest in dandyism and that in France, almost singlehandedly, generated a similar popular interest. Its ostensible rarefaction, assimilating dandyism to the world of

ideas, ultimately breathed new life into the tradition by providing theoretical parameters for its future development.

The dandy as revolutionary is not a complete solecism. It should be remembered that the dandy appeared in the years following the French Revolution, his ambivalence in his interactions with the aristocracy may be taken as a token of this fact: He exploited it to be above it and once above it could be against it. This is, at least, his mythology, in the Barthesian sense of a dominant cultural reading. It is certain, however, that without the prevalent class upheaval at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he would not have existed, constituting as he did a certain *déclassé* element and commanding a popularity, in his actuality and in his fictionalized form (in contemporary popular literature), that cut across existing class barriers.

It has been claimed that the inversion of the banal over the profound - the moment of the neck-cloth, for example - indicates a function of the dandy as providing an internal critique on his social milieu such that his stance possesses an oppositional character. Sima Godfrey in a 1982 essay, "The Dandy as Ironic Figure," posits a similar thesis.¹⁴ In the essay she develops an analogy between the ironic figure in discourse and the intellectual dandy, particularly in France. The analogy demonstrates the significance of 'foreignness' to the dandy: meaning, figuratively, his critique relies on his aloofness, his status as inside-outsider, to his own culture; and meaning, literally, as a somewhat exotic import to the French,

his foreignness self-consciously became part of the dandyfied stance. The effect of the analogy is to show how his critique can only be appreciated as such by those of the dandy's 'inner circle' who have been made initiates into its logic. So that dandyism, according to Charles Baudelaire - its chief French exponent - is an "institution outside the law" and one to which only the privileged can gain access.¹⁵ Godfrey explains the exclusivity of the dandy's wit in terms of the logic of irony.

Both irony and the dandiacal inversion play upon conventional expectations. Each according to Godfrey, bespeaks the existence of two conflicting codes held in a dialectical relationship. The first is the language of direct reference, its valorizations taken for granted, the second is the impertinent code, a language that ironically inverts these valorizations. It is to the second that Brummell appeals when he complains of his gout, "But this is my *favourite* leg!" By admitting the humour of the comment we admit the existence of the subversive code of irony. With a simple ironic gesture, the dandy escapes the direct claims made on him by the dominant code, that of etiquette or of socially correct behaviour, and, in some small way, he throws into question the bourgeois morality supported by that code. In permitting him his conceit we are constituted as an audience *in the know*. As has already been suggested this logic has become familiar to us through its absorption in the taste categories of camp, kitsch and pop. These and certain strategies of the avant-garde share with dandyism a propensity for making us as an

audience complicit in their challenge to the conventions we ordinarily observe. The exclusivity of dandyfied wit has become historically more and more generalized. The exploitation of the "world of irony" common to these categories, however, still acts to marginalize them and generates a dynamic wherein we are, in a sense, fellow conspirators in our own demise.¹⁶

But such a deliberate hyperbole requires justification. If the dandy 'throws bourgeois morality into question', it is only ever 'in some small way'. If our complicity makes us 'conspirators', it does so at the expense of the conspiracy, breaking down the sense of an opposition as much as creating it. And our 'demise' is only at the hands of the quicker wit. The problem with the thrust of Sima Godfrey's argument is that it makes of the dandiacal feint or parry a monolithic opposition - between languages - thoroughly out of keeping with the determined insubstantiality of the dandy's pose. By ignoring the cultivated inconsequentiality of the dandy, as another recent commentator on dandyism asserts, the antimoralism of the dandy has come to be grossly overrated.

"All art is quite useless," writes Oscar Wilde in his preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.¹⁷ And as he stated on his lecture tour to America, in 1882, "The secret of life... is art." Carter Ratcliff in a 1988 article, "Dandyism and Abstraction in a Universe Defined by Newton," makes this very uselessness the decisive characteristic of dandyism. He takes his cue from Baudelairean dandyism, which, as

Baudelaire propounded it, is the first step toward "establishing a new kind of aristocracy, [based] on the most precious, the most indestructible faculties, on the divine gifts that neither work nor money can give," beyond any appeal to utilitarian or moral purposes: Ratcliff writes that the Baudelairean dandy is a recent ancestor of the 20th-century avant-gardiste.¹⁸ But that despite the legacy he hands down, the dandy "seeks no new order - he seeks nothing, and does next to nothing. He makes jokes, dresses with intimidating correctness, and hands down judgements of taste calculated to fill the initiated with trepidation."¹⁹ The dandy is useless, yet the supreme judge of taste. He places himself outside Newtonian physics with its acts and consequences and is indifferent to all manipulations of causality, including those of the marketplace, its supply and demand.²⁰ His inconsequentiality is the strict observance of indifference, and yet by his very aloofness, the autonomy of his position, he affects the mundane sphere. To paraphrase *Dorian Gray*, his mode of dressing, the particular styles he affects are influential. Though irreducible, he is copied; though original, others try "to reproduce the accidental charm of his graceful, though to him only half-serious, fopperies."²¹

The dandy's mocking position of inconsequentiality does have consequences. And, according to Carter Ratcliff, that he is effective in arbitrating taste and style, and that he is ineffectual, derive from the singular fact of his self-constitution as a "visual object" (Carlyle), hence, as

an abstraction, "an idea of beauty."²² He is a symbol, even in the sense of emptiness, incomprehensibility, and resistance to interpretation. If his symbolic status works out its effects upon the popular imaginary it is because of his primary intervention at the level of representation. From the above singular fact also derives the link between the dandy and art, the dandy as art. For Ratcliff, as for Wilde before him, the dandy as art entails art as dandyfied.

As has been noted, Barbey D'Aurevilly's 1845 essay developed dandyism in terms of its abstract possibilities, principally, its potential as a political strategy of intellectual opposition. To this must now be added its potential as an artistic manoeuvre towards resistance to interpretation. It is Barbey's initial abstraction that makes possible the possibility of abstraction, with its dandyfied nonutilitarian connotations. That is, his abstraction of dandyism, the dandy's life as art, makes available a mode of *resistance* to the growing prevalence of institutional interpretations during the Victorian era, such as mapped by Michel Foucault in his histories. This has specific implications for the world of art since early modernity is marked by the appearance of institutions established to interpret and legitimate art works and thereby act as intermediary between the art world and the marketplace. The dandiactal uselessness of art - Carter Ratcliff cites the readymades of Marcel Duchamp as an example - is in the nature of a parry: its prime objective is not to provoke interpretation but to avoid it.

The shift in the dandy's stance from feint to parry occurs between the time of Brummell, the Regency period, and the time of Wilde, the fin de siècle. The parry develops a series of original responses to the exigencies of its time in order to sidestep those exigencies. Wilde's dandyism contrasts with Brummell's in that the former's is also a use of dandyism. The fin de siècle dandy's life and art are as positions held in opposition to which the dandy is the tertium quid. In describing the parry the views of Sima Godfrey and Carter Ratcliff can be seen to complement each other. The impassibility of the Beau is reformulated as ironic opposition and remains intact as a general stance. The dandy's deliberate inconsequentiality allows him to achieve and maintain that stance. And in conjunction these comprise the specificity or specialization of that stance as dandiacal.

II

the art world

goes pop

What is most obviously original in the parry is at once that which permits him to be regarded as a 'recent ancestor' of the avant-gardist. For in the interval between Brummell and Wilde art has come to be constituted as the 'art world', a separate realm over which Baudelaire's 'new aristocracy' of dandies is ideally suited to hold sway.

Generally, social historians and critics of dandyism (such as Ellen Moers, Linda Dowling, Regenia Gagnier)²³ portray the new status of the art world in terms of increasing commercialization, the growing prevalence of self-advertising and the sell-out to popular and debased æsthetic taste. The participation of the dandy in the cultural marketplace as a producer they anathematize since he is thereby made vulnerable to the same debasement suffered universally at an historical moment of cultural decadence. From his involvement in that 'decadence' follows the decay of his own identity. However, the constitution of the art world in its relative autonomy entailed not only the subordination of art to commercialism but also the liberation of art from the encroachment of utilitarianism and from the cultural politics and taste strictures of a patronizing élite. The condition under which it could secure itself as a political realm independent from a class and its politics, the aristocracy, was the same condition that made it

partially subject to the vicissitudes of the world of commerce. In turn, the world of commerce as it relates to art means little more than a selling out to popular taste, but, decisively, a popular taste which the art world itself - even to the artist - was more than ever in a position to alter according to its particular idealism, to direct toward ideals that it could set in place. This moment in cultural politics has been variously construed as the misplaced assumption of social responsibility on the part of artists - especially in the pre-war dispensation -, or an equally misplaced assumption of moral guidance and governance on the part of the intelligentsia - in the post war world.²⁴ Both contingencies indicate a change in the political constituency of art, a change whereby the patronized artist would come to resemble the dandy in his ability to gain access to a popular audience.

The fin de siècle dandy was in a unique position as regards the art world and could enter the Baudelairean 'promised land' because of his idealism, an idealism consistent with his nonutilitarian antibourgeois stance, with his opposition. He could take the artistic lead because of his longstanding legislative relation to popular taste. That is, he could assume specifically æsthetic responsibility for no other reason than his own good taste.

Contributing concomitantly to the dandy's entry into the kingdom, the gradual material decay of the traditional aristocracy, which threatened him with the loss of its patronage (in all senses), made the salon and artistic coterie the most favourable

social milieu for his impertinent activities. Not only that, it brought the artist and the dandy together, in both proximity and likeness, so that the dandy could quite naturally proclaim, 'art for art's sake'.

The so-called self-advertising of Wilde's promulgation of *Æstheticism* - his coming down from Oxford to London as 'Professor of *Æsthetics*' - is a particularly dandiacal response to the opportunity the new status of the art world offered the dandy as political arena for his activities and to the responsibility that came with that freedom. It refers ironically to three sets of relations conventionally circumscribing the place of the bourgeois artist. The dandyfied resistance to institutional interpretation has already been noted; by ironically assuming the role of interpreter himself, Wilde challenges the art-critical pretensions of academic institutions. He works actively to make redundant its presumption to act as intermediary on behalf of the artist or the public, on behalf of the marketplace or the art world. Secondly, the dandy becomes the public persona of Wilde the artist, undermining the notion of his artistic integrity. Richard Ellmann's among other portrayals of Wilde (such as in *Gagnier*)²⁵ translates bourgeois anxiety over the artist's apparent loss of integrity into the familiar discourse on the innate contradictions in Wilde's character: he was Catholic and Pagan, family man and criminal homosexual, artist and dandy. To do this seems to change Wilde's dictum, that he stood in a symbolic relation to his age, into, he stood in a paradoxical relation to his age. The dandy is a

parvenu to the art world just as much as he was to the aristocracy: he did not belong to it, it belonged to him. Hence, Wilde could say only his talent went into his art. His genius was as a Man of Fashion - in a symbolic relation to his age - addressing himself to art as he would to the wearing of a buttonhole;²⁶ that is, with high seriousness. And therein lies the nature of his responsibility, the responsibility he took on as æsthetic arbiter for the art world. Thirdly, the dandy invests the inconsequential with the concentration and high-mindedness the artist should reserve for his art. Arising therefrom, dandyfied art frustrates the expectations of the bourgeois audience that the artwork will tell them something worth knowing, especially in terms of accumulating cultural capital. It ostensibly celebrates its own vanity, its own uselessness, its 'æstheticism'. But dandyism and dandyfied art could reach a popular audience in part because dandiacal irony escaped it. What distinguishes a Richelieu from a Brummell, as Barbey D'Aurevilly writes, (and it could be said what distinguishes his critics from Wilde himself) is that the former sees society as dissolute and that for the latter society is hypocritical: the second view is a statement of dandyism, the first a statement of fatuity.²⁷ The populace was as ready as ever to fête the ascendancy of the dandy despite the gentle subversion of his art.

The dandy's avoidance of ostentation and shock-value follows Brummell's tenet of dandyism that the Man of Fashion must remain inconspicuous in the art of dress. So Wilde in the world of art was

determined to maintain his fashionability. He courted notoriety in order to uphold this principle. He sought the approbation of his peers (just as Brummell formed a circle of initiates around him), but not exclusively, only insofar as it did not compromise his reputation and so as better to disseminate his reputation. He exploited his artistic peers in order to be above them; a view with which James McNeill Whistler would concur, since he accused Wilde of plagiarizing for his own self-aggrandizement.²⁸ Although, Whistler's dandyfied art, as much as Wilde's, put pay to the idea of value - artistic and commercial - resting solely in the artwork, without reference to the æsthetic credentials of the dandy himself. His refinement and cultivation made it possible for the dandy to arbitrate for value independent of conventional critical assumptions about how art should look. That Whistler won his libel suit against John Ruskin in 1877, where the latter asked him to justify a price of 200 guineas for one of his paintings, set a legal precedent to this effect.²⁹ For Wilde, the great work of art mattered less than that the artist could always call art into existence.³⁰ The artwork drew its validation less from the pertinent facts of a history or tradition than from a sense of taste which retained its aristocratic character. The hopes of the bourgeoisie were again frustrated: Culture could not so easily be inculcated with the facts at the comprehensive schools newly set up to service the middle-classes, since it relied on the maker of taste, on the dandy: "nothing that is worth knowing can be taught."³¹ The exercise of taste in art becomes the political act for Men of Fashion. It is

an act of resisting democratization even as it is made available to all.

Carter Ratcliff adduces the analytic abstractionism of Ad Reinhardt and Andy Warhol's Pop as later developments in the history of dandyfied art.³² For many modern critics Warhol's work exemplifies artistic sterility as the result of the artist's complicity with commercialism,³³ as Reinhardt's exemplifies the deadend of modern art. Warhol, especially, develops Wilde's idea of the reproducibility of art, both in his repetition of 'icons' and in the fact that he could always do another. He wants to be a machine. Yet where he seems most assimilated into the marketplace he is least assimilable by its most machine-like attributes. By assuming the passivity of a visual object, Warhol is unmoved by the flow of exchange. Moreover, he counters the charge Regenia Gagnier brings against the dandy's implication in commerce, that of selling himself, his 'aura' (Walter Benjamin).³⁴ As a dandy, he does not sell himself, as object, image or brand-name, but the products and effects of his taste. He does next to nothing; his intervention is inconspicuous: yet he makes stars and authorizes the fantastic. The secret of his facility and success - a secret exercising a general fascination - rests in his social function. Not only is he *seen* (see, for example, the recent nude photographs of Jeff Koons, a Warhol aspirant³⁵), but he gratifies the vanity of an hypocritical society by being seen with it and in it. The dandy's vanity is manifest in the degree to which he is seen to flatter his milieu with his attentions, because in so doing he invokes a

slight critical distance which makes him better. In presenting his own vanity and uselessness as virtues he locates his society as the place where they can be accounted virtues. It should be added that Warhol's 'Campbell Soup Can' is fantastic for this reason. The art world cannot object without cutting its neck.

To say that the dandy is sincere where his society is hypocritical, however, would be to support a similar cultural cliché to that which conventionally condemns dandyism as male effeminacy. The opposite is perhaps closer to the truth, except that dandiacal irony, part condescension, part impertinence, is more culturally productive than hypocrisy for being less critically direct. The dandy is saved from the hypocrisy of, for example, the 'critic of mass culture' - whose views will pass into that culture - by a sense of tact which derives from his engagement in society. It is this tact, also, that liberates the dandy from the need for sincerity felt, for example, by the 'socially committed artist'.

III

in which

the dandy makes camp

If Pop shows dandyism parrying the supposed threat of the marketplace, the dandy who parries the "looming dominance of the other" is Camp.³⁶ The appearance of the cigarette smoking, bicycle riding New Woman brings fin de siècle dandyism to its finish, according to Ellen Moers. It means the end of the dandy's engagement in social forms, the end of his popularity. Max Beerbohm's self-imposed isolation in Rapallo from 1910 to 1956 epitomizes the dandy's graceful retirement from the scene. There, he lives on his nostalgia, and leaves the future to the greater vitality and self-assurance of the erstwhile 'weaker sex'. Moers shows how the popular literature of the fin de siècle came to be dominated by women and how the figure of the male dandy was relegated to the status of the kept man.³⁷ Wilde writes of London Society as "entirely made up of dowdies and dandies ... The men are all dowdies and the women are all dandies."³⁸ He relies for his irony on the presupposition that the dandy is always male. Of the fin de siècle dandies, Moers concludes that their effeminacy was a weakness, not an embellishment; their allegiance turned to the æsthetic fringe, not the ruling aristocracy; their sphere reduced itself to the problematic domain of pathology, leaving the glory of an ideal far behind.³⁹ The unintended irony here relies on the low estimation of the

effeminate, which together with the dandy's involvement in art lead on to sickness. This was indeed the view expressed at Oscar Wilde's trials.

D'Aurevilly gives the 'womanliness' of the dandy its most extreme formulation: For both the dandy and woman "*paraître, c'est être*".⁴⁰ What could be a damning description from the anti-dandiacals of, for instance, *Fraser's Magazine*,⁴¹ whose gentlemanly misogyny led them to equate the dandy's fopperies with the dissimulation of women, is in context a statement of superiority. The dandy's commitment to appearances, to show, and to an exacting toilette, bespeaks for the dandiacal Barbey a higher morality, what Wilde characterizes in *Dorian Gray* as the "spiritualizing of the senses".⁴² It is, in addition, that which Wilde's narrative condemns in the figure of Dorian himself as an ethos culminating in self-destruction and loss of life if followed exclusively. Despite the compliment *Du Dandysme* might appear to pay women as somehow natural dandies, only the men are permitted the self-transcendence of a dandyism appertaining to a higher morality, as if (to adapt Wilde), women are too dandiacal to be dandies. Nevertheless, the ascription to the dandy of conventionally feminine qualities, such as vanity, elegance in dress, social grace, even to inconsequentiality and unproductive idleness, in short the approval by men of his effeminacy, goes some small way toward legitimizing in the popular imagination her femininity. It is to a degree this estimation of the feminine that allowed the New Woman to act and it is against the restrictions it

imposed upon her that she reacted. Moreover, as I will argue, the spread of an æsthetics, in which dandies participated, based on sexual ambiguity, the musing of gender delineations, created conditions conducive to the so-called rise of the New Woman.

Susan Sontag notes, "camp is the answer to the problem: how to be a dandy in an age of mass culture."⁴³ Sontag's point is that post-war camp allows 'high' to direct 'mass' culture in the limited sense of making available the culturally subversive logic of camp to the intellectual and critic.⁴⁴ The intellectual and critic can decide what is good on the basis of what is truly bad, since, for Sontag, in its extreme form, camp declares "it's good because it's awful".⁴⁵ Sontag aligns herself less with a theory of camp than with the potential for campiness of theory. The dandyism of the fin de siècle, however, set certain parameters for the appearance of camp, of which the fundamental premise is the conjunction peculiar to the dandy of exclusivity with popularity. I have called this tact: in it are conjoined flattery and impertinence. Those parameters can best be described by referring to the summary account, given by Ellen Moers, of the fin de siècle dandies, an account representative of the conventional view of dandyism:

- that their effeminacy was a weakness;
- that their allegiance lay with the æsthetic fringe;
- that their sphere was reduced to the domain of pathology.

Firstly, the condemnation of dandies for effeminacy originates in the anti-dandiacal movement of the mid-Victorian era. As dealt with by Moers,⁴⁶ it consisted in a backlash against moral laxity, and the laxity of sexual mores, in the Regency period, the loss of gentlemanly virtue (or even virtù). Roughly contemporary with the anti-dandiacals in England, Barbey D'Aurevilly, in France, was reaffirming effeminacy on a theoretical level. It enabled the male dandy to transcend himself through a cultivation of his exterior qualities. Edward George Bulwer-Lytton asserted a similar and similarly theoretical movement in the first edition of his popular novel, *Pelham*. Under pressure from the anti-dandiacals, he was forced to change the novel and add a new preface dissociating himself from the attitudes of his hero for subsequent editions.⁴⁷ By the time of Wilde's flourishing, the charge of effeminacy had become something of cliché, inoperative except as a euphemism for deviance. Although fin de siècle dandies may be called effeminate for their appropriation of stereotypically feminine characteristics, it was, by the end of the century, no longer their resemblance to women, or effeminacy, that was at stake, rather the imputation of homosexuality. The discourse of sexuality helped as an imposed constraint, and the discourse of the third sex (or 'Love that dare not speak its name') helped as an adoptive position, in shaping a new set of attitudes and motives. (I will deal with the third sex and the discourse of sexuality more fully later.) The opposition proposed in the conventional

view of dandyism between the New Woman and Dandy can be seen to rely - once these factors are taken into consideration - on an anachronistic interpretation incognizant of the changes in contemporary social and sexual relations. The third sex, which is thematically inclusive of homosexuality, possessed a facilitative aspect for both the Dandy and New Woman.⁴⁸ For her it announced a political strength that came from the recognition of female sexuality. For him it expressed a cultural strength that derived from the setting in place of an idealism, a liberatory æsthetics. Where his liberation was from sex, her's was for sex. The New Woman, like the modern feminist, her heir, had a greater interest in politicizing sexuality, even to politicizing dress, than the Dandy. The dress reform movement, in which Constance Wilde participated, showed dress and especially corsetry to be evidence of the subjugation of women. Since he had the law to contend with, the dandy's relation to sexuality was perforce more indirect. Sodomite by association had been an accepted formula when Wilde was at Oxford, as the case of the 'Balliol bugger' demonstrates, who was officially charged with "keeping and reciting immoral poetry".⁴⁹ The dandy exercised his influence in the sexual politics of the culture industry, a domain that eventually included marginal taste groups like gay camp, and a corollary to the politicization of sexuality.⁵⁰ His assertion of male beauty bore ironically on a state of affairs in which effeminacy endured as a euphemism, since the beauty of his sex was made to supplant the truth of his sex. Consistent with

dandiacal logic, the truth could be discerned only by the initiate. For Wilde this came to signify his ascendancy over an at best marginal peer-group by way of the smallest token of sexual subversion, by way, for example, of the green carnation.⁵¹ In turn, the very smallness of this token, its inconsequentiality, is quintessentially dandiacal. In it is invested the whole right to ornamentation of the male and in the marginality of the peer-group to whom it appeals rests the vanguardest potential to alter the course of cultural history. Had this investment and potential not been realized Wilde's reputation as a dandy, and as a dandy aboveall, would not have been assured. The dandy's ironic relation to, specifically, homosexuality here sets a parameter for the emergence of the taste category of camp: which puts in question the right to ornamentation and emotion as the exclusive right of women;⁵² which works to "destabilize, reshape, and transform the existing balance of accepted sexual roles and sexual identities";⁵³ which annexes from the other for its own ironic purposes.

Secondly, the dandy's allegiance to the æsthetic fringe, rather than to the ruling aristocracy,⁵⁴ was the result of the demise of that aristocracy and the loss of its continued patronage. What Ellen Moers calls the 'aesthetic fringe' came to fulfil for the dandy the function of an aristocracy as he changed his allegiance from Society to the salon. Furthermore, it came to fulfil the function of an aristocracy celebrating and disseminating its own tastes as it began to resemble an avant-garde. And because it was marginal, in it resided those who

knew how to and those who could afford to live on the fringes of cultural, sexual and political experimentation.

The threat the New Woman posed to dandyism, as the conventional view conceived it, was carried out by her relegation of the dandy to fringe status, to the status of 'kept man' and flunky. However, the rise of the New Woman cannot be postulated without reference to the effect of the marginal upon the mainstream, an effect of which the dandy is a sublime example. The New Woman, proto-feminist, was the popular embodiment of ideals that had gained their first utterance in the cultural margins, particularly in post-revolutionary France, and her ascendancy should be regarded alongside the changes in taste in which the dandy played a substantial role. For instance, the sexual politics implicit in the resurgence of interest in classical androgyny among the artistic vanguard and educated élite indicates the influence of dandyism: the sexuality of the androgyne is indiscernible except to the initiate, is present but sublimated according to a logic of ironic indirection; by rendering sexuality inconsequential - without direct consequences - the androgyne manifests dandyfied taste. And in resisting the attribution of a gendered identity, as such an identity was previously understood, the androgyne prepares the way for the formation of a new type of identity, that in the person of the New Woman is not simply a masculinized woman and that in the person of the dandy is not simply a feminized man. It should further be pointed out that the women's movement

of the nineteenth century needed the impetus that came from the 'third sex' whose membership was predominantly found in the æsthetic fringe in order to break with the existing sexual code. The dandy's 'Love that dare not speak its name' is already implicated within the thematics of the third sex. His implication in the æsthetic fringe sets a parameter for the appearance of camp taste. Susan Sontag links the rise of feminism in the 1970s to the diffusion of camp taste, the effects of which in facilitating the spread of feminism, she says, cannot be underestimated. Beside her statement, dandyism could similarly be said to have had a "considerable if inadvertent" role in the rise of the New Woman at the end of the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

Thirdly, the reduction of the dandy's sphere to the domain of pathology presents an additional parameter for the appearance of camp taste. It calls attention to the medicalization of homosexuality that would link it with the pathological and the dandy's resistance to the claims of the medical argument through his appeal to a cultural argument. For the dandy, Wilde, the 'Love that dare not speak its name' postulates an æstheticization of same-sex love that is historically prior to and culturally more potent than its medicalization. It insists on the classical provenance of male and female homosexuality, a fact self-consciously promoted by the followers of Sappho or Plato. By ignoring the pragmatic situation of members of the third sex - at best victims of public censure, at worst criminals -, the 'Love that dare not speak its

name' negotiates between a lived reality and an ideal fantasy. It does address that situation, however, insofar as it parries its claims and sidesteps its responsibilities: what it proposes is an indirect relation between the conditions it speaks to and the discourse it speaks with.⁵⁶ In this sense it is thoroughly compatible with the camp attitude in the form of 'The lie that tells the truth' (Jean Cocteau). Hence, Andrew Ross has shown how gay camp idolization of Hollywood starlets negotiates through the fantasy of the silver screen to assert gay rights.⁵⁷ Ross contradicts the charge that misogyny inheres in this idolization - as yet another exploitative reading - by pointing out that any reading which defetishizes the erotic scenario of woman-as-spectacle is a reading worth having.⁵⁸ The charge of misogyny that could be directed against dandyism, as inherent in the traditionally dandiacal view that for women "*paraître, c'est être*", is able to be refuted in an analogous manner: A desexualizing interpretation of gender is one worth having. And is so even before the ironies attendant on the dandiacal viewpoint are taken into account. I have therefore argued that the dandy's irony, his 'lie', prepares the way for the New Woman, though she does not take up on that irony. The taste category of camp perpetuates the logic of his irony. Dandyism sets the parameters of its lie.

Dandyism exists on the borders of preexisting sexual stereotypes, which it treats with a lack of seriousness that challenges the rigidity of those borders. If the Man of Fashion, from the Beau on,

was effeminate, his effeminacy was increasingly socially acceptable and, to the extent that he was emulated by young men wishing to gain introduction into Society, it was fashionable. For a young æsthete of the 1890s, such as Aubrey Beardsley, effeminate behaviour was *de rigueur*, except that two new factors had begun to intervene. The first was the juridical and scientific discourse of sexuality, which made it more and more difficult to maintain a stance of being sexually undecided and ambivalent. The second was that the dandy's allegiance no longer lay completely with the Society of the traditional aristocracy, it lay rather with the salons of the art world. Having considered the advent of Camp, therefore, I will examine the problematization of the dandy's sexuality, his place within the context of a 'third sex' and that of his putative opposition, the New Woman, and the correlation of these factors with changes in the art world.

As late as 1882, Oscar Wilde could still be called by Mrs Henry Adams, in conversation with Henry James, sexually 'undecided'.⁵⁹ Wilde's æsthete's costume, on his American tour, had given rise to certain rumours (James balked at the knickerbockers), and the term now hinted at deviance rather than eccentricity. Wilde had already received Whitman's kiss, and would later report to George Ives - a champion of 'deviance' - how forthright Walt Whitman had been to him regarding his homosexuality.⁶⁰ According to Michel Foucault, homosexuality enters the juridico-scientific discourse in 1870.⁶¹ Its various

subcategories of behaviour are defined and circumscribed in what was virtually a new industry, allied by Foucault with the overall aim of the 'control of populations'. Despite the production of diverse monotypic sexualities, social stereotypes of gender persist, but the dandy's fashionable ambivalence regarding the latter is no longer sufficient to resist against the claims of the former. The stance of the feint, which allowed George Brummell to rest enigmatic regarding his sexuality (despite the efforts of his later biographers), gives way to the parry. Wilde places his positions in opposition, whether they be subject-positions conferred upon him by a dominant discourse (to use the Foucauldian vocabulary), or positions he has adopted from his own sexual, political or artistic predilection. Hence, when called on to answer to his crimes during his trials of 1895, that is, when called on to speak as a homosexual, Wilde defended himself, as an artist, and his actions as having artistic precedent. Rather than constituting a 'reverse discourse',⁶² Wilde's defense of his sexual proclivity is as the 'Love that dare not speak its name'.⁶³ His speech on this subject won him applause at the trial and bears marked similarities to a passage in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* on the nobility of the love Dorian bears Basil Hallward.⁶⁴ The 'Love that dare not speak its name' and the general thematics of the 'third sex' may be considered part of a cultural movement resistant to the medicalization of homosexuality.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, and early twentieth, small communities

proclaiming freedom from sexual convention proliferated. There were lesbians on Lesbos and free-lovers in Wainoni.⁶⁵ The challenge they posed to bourgeois sexual mores usually occurred in combination with artistic experimentation and, often, with radical politics. This subcultural trend owed much to a conjuncture wherein men might display 'feminine' traits and women undertake 'masculine' occupations (like smoking cigarettes) - the 'dowdies and dandies' of Wilde's description - but marked a new departure in the correlation between art and sex that dispensed with its simple dualism. Sexuality, specifically same-sex love, functioned as a rallying point, not in the sense of 'gay liberation', but as a new sex, the 'third sex'. It indicated, for its advocates, the emergence of an alternative cultural tradition. At a time that characterized itself as culturally decadent,⁶⁶ it offered the tangible possibility of renaissance; a renaissance implied in Walter Pater's infamous conclusion to his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (of the 1873 edition, omitted from that of 1877).⁶⁷ Because the model of sexual liberty was still the society of ancient Greece,⁶⁸ renaissance could be understood in terms of its full historical reference, as the revival of classical forms. Reciprocally, the classical model inspired members of the third sex, as noted, to call themselves by names such as Sapphists, or Uranians. Androgyny, in a similar, but more conspicuous way, fulfilled a prospective and retrospective function in developing the liberatory cultural possibilities identified with the third sex.

The androgyne appeared in the work of the pre-Raphaelites, most notably in the works of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Simeon Solomon and Charles Ricketts. It was the Grosvenor gallery that championed the work of these artists, the gallery recognised by Lord Henry Wotton in *Dorian Gray* as "really the only place" where the picture of a young and beautiful Dorian could be exhibited.⁶⁹ The androgyne appeared as a creature of indeterminable gender.⁷⁰ Alternatively, rather than displaying complete indeterminacy, the androgyne presented his/her sexuality as discernible only to the initiate, since s/he served as the homoerotic ideal for male and female artists. In Romaine Brooks's '*Le Trajet*', for instance, the androgyne had "small immature breasts, no pubic hair and a slim body" more a boy's than a girl's.⁷¹ The androgyne was as much an accommodation to the constraints placed on public representations of homoerotic material as an embodiment, promoted by both lesbian and male homosexual artists, of an æsthetic ideal. Basil Hallward finds this ideal in his painting of Dorian Gray, a work which he sees as holding the potential of restoring an "abstract sense of beauty" to the world. His refusal to exhibit the painting would seem to indicate that despite its 'abstraction' and indirection, for the painter the work has an unequivocal meaning.⁷² Aubrey Beardsley's bisexual proclivities led him to ridicule and further explore the possibilities of this ideal in his hermaphroditic figures.⁷³ The androgyne was even an Æstheticist and Symbolist ideal, since it was in her/his nature to be so veiled as to sexual 'truth',

oblique and beautiful rather than frank and ugly. The androgyne was to a large degree the chosen emblem of the same-sex subculture. The "first space-age bisexual Deco superstar," David Bowie in his 1970s incarnation, fulfilled a similar function, if one more widely disseminated and recognized in popular culture.⁷⁴

The commercially successful lesbian artist, Rosa Bonheur (1822-99), submitted an account of herself as 'contrasexual' to the Magnus Hirschfeld Institute of Sexology in Berlin, in the mid-nineteenth century. She saw herself in neutral terms, as androgynous, because her life-partner was a woman.⁷⁵ Indeed, the history of androgyny had particular significance for women of the Victorian era. Ambiguous desire is at least an advance on no desire. As David Greenberg writes in *The Construction of Homosexuality*, "asexuality was part of [the] constellation of ideal feminine traits."⁷⁶ In a libel suit of 1819, the House of Lords thoroughly discounted the idea of women seeking sexual pleasure with other women, "there is no indecency in one woman going to bed with another"; although schoolboys and male orphans weren't allowed to share beds.⁷⁷ If there were the odd female indecency, it was due - as Larousse's *Dictionnaire universal du XIXe siècle* maintained - to a fluke of physiognomy, the preternatural enlargement of the clitoris.⁷⁸ The asexuality of women, along with rigid codification of gender-roles, increased the emotional distance between men and women, making same-sex love an attractive option for many women.⁷⁹ For many men

the 'decorative sex' (Wilde) must have been simply that: attachment between men could be more satisfying and 'male friendship' provide greater emotional, if not always erotic, fulfilment.

In Wilde's biography, the 'Love that dare not speak its name' laid claim to an historical community of artists, taking in Shakespeare and Michelangelo, and to a tradition celebrating 'male friendship' that dated back to Athens. Unfortunately for Wilde and many others, this cultural object of homosexuality, despite its long history, was not coextensive with the legal and psychological object of homosexuality. Its condonation had no legal precedent, and its case studies were artistic and not scientific. But it was successful in foregrounding what were later called homosexual 'interests' through the influence exercised by the subcultural vanguard and the educated élite - who often amounted to the same people - since they possessed credentials that the art world otherwise lacked cut off from aristocratic patronage.

The fact that it had a long and exalted history made 'male friendship' accessible to Wilde, initially, at Oxford, as an object of study, a cultural tradition. Led by Walter Pater, the Oxonian élite married - in the academic closet - the long lineage of this tradition with the high learning necessary to establish its historical antecedents. Whether practising homosexuals, or not (as Wilde), the standard-bearers of 'male friendship' had conferred upon them membership to an exclusive set brought closer by secrecy. At Cambridge, the

need for secrecy would develop into the nature of a closed sect, 'The Apostles', of which some consider 'Jack the Ripper' to have been a member, and of which Burgess, Philby and MacLean were members between wars. Wilde reputedly boasted that he gained as much pleasure from talking about homosexuality as others from practising it.⁸⁰ Despite Richard Ellmann's suggestion that it was the criminal element in homosexual love that appealed to Oscar Wilde's 'dual character',⁸¹ it is perhaps nearer the truth to suggest that homosexuality presented for Wilde certain artistic advantages.

Wilde alludes in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to the sort of innovation in taste that could lend homosexuality certain artistic advantages. "There are only two eras of any importance in the world's history," he has Basil Hallward, the painter of Dorian's portrait, say. "The first is the appearance of a new medium for art, and the second is the appearance of new a personality for art also. What the invention of oil-painting was to the Venetians, the face of Antinoüs [purportedly the Emperor Hadrian's catamite] was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will some day be to me." Dorian's youth and beauty define for the painter, "the lines of a fresh school, a school that is to have in it all the passion of the romantic spirit, all the perfection of the spirit that is Greek." Basil, therefore, wishes not to display the portrait, not because it expresses the artist's appreciation of male beauty, but because it portrays the "abstract sense of beauty".⁸² Homoerotic art was the contemporary domain of greatest innovation in

taste and for the peer-group in which Wilde found himself homosexual love was an ideal to aspire to and a fact of life. To dominate over one's peers is of course the initial condition of artistic success.⁸³

The dandy is an avant-gardiste, like Duchamp, an entrepreneur, like Diaghilev, a pop-star like Bowie. And like Oscar Wilde, he is first his own patron, and image-maker, resistant to Commerce by allegiance to Art and vice versa. Just as Warhol's Pop, though at the remove of some years from fin de siècle dandyism, epitomizes the dandiacal parry of commercialism, so Camp epitomizes the parry of what the conventional view of dandyism portrayed as the 'looming dominance of the other'.⁸⁴

IV

the beautiful

secret

Sexuality has come to figure prominently in this study of dandyism, conceding to conventional arguments its significance, but denying that once the dandy is sexed his perfection is lost. The latter view has something in common with the prurience of those literary critics who see in Wilde's work, especially in its thematization of secrecy, the closeting of desire - for evil.⁸⁵ Or those, like Neil Bartlett, who conversely regard homosexuality as omnipresent though hidden in the work - for good.⁸⁶ Both virtually amount to the same thing. One regards themes of secrecy as manifestations of Wilde's own 'secret', the reflexive return of his personal repressed. The other reads every word Wilde wrote as the statement of his sexuality, being the truth it is all too readily found out.⁸⁷ The author himself, of course, would be delighted to find his veiled attacks on the criticism of his own day still finding their mark a hundred years hence. "Formerly we used to canonize our heroes," he writes in "The Critic as Artist," "The modern method is to vulgarize them." And, "It is always Judas who writes the biography."⁸⁸ For Wilde biographical critics are the "mere body-snatchers of literature. The dust is given to one, and the ashes to another, and the soul is out of their reach."⁸⁹ If I have spoken of Wilde's sexuality it has been to try and locate him within the shifting perspective of

contemporary sexual politics, a perspective whose shifting he was bound to influence as a dandy, standing, so he said, in a symbolic relation to his age. This factor cannot be underestimated, since otherwise he would not have come to be recognised as 'gay martyr' or 'arch pervert', a symbol of the naughtiness of the 'nineties or a symbolic victim of its repressive practices. However, there is something to be said for an interpretation of Wilde's work that arouses one to the possibility of some secret action or motive having its place beyond the work, a possibility that is simply titillatory if it merely means sex or psychology and that is not simply titillatory if it means rather attending to the rhetoric of secrecy within the work. To interpret Wilde's homosexuality as consubstantial with the work at least has the virtue also of reinstating intentionality in the work, as the product of the author's desire, indeed, if it possess only this virtue. These interpretations fall short then by applying the personality of the author as a gauge of the work, they fall short of the soul of either, but point to an area of self-consciousness in Wilde's style, the secret of that style.⁹⁰ As Wilde maintained, "there is no fine art without self-consciousness."⁹¹

The Picture of Dorian Gray is the story of a secret, specifically of Dorian's secret. But in fact secrets recur so often throughout the novel as to give an impression of a general immanence of secrecy. Before considering what that immanence may signify, if anything, it is worth considering the significance of Dorian's own secret. It is a secret

that informs Dorian's character and as I will argue informs the dandyism of his nature, a nature which is artificial.

Basil Hallward, for a reason he proceeds to explain to his interlocutor, Lord Henry Wotton, and for reasons that become increasingly clear as the action progresses, wants to keep the name of the model for his exquisite portrait a secret. "I have grown to love secrecy," he says, "It seems to be the one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvellous to us. The commonest thing is delightful if one only hides it."⁹² The 'thing' in question is in fact most uncommon. It is Dorian Gray, possessor of a "fascinating" personality, a "simple and beautiful nature";⁹³ and it is Dorian Gray, in whom the painter has discovered an æsthetic ideal, of which Dorian himself is initially 'unconscious'.⁹⁴ "His merely physical presence" has inspired Basil to realise in his painting both the modernity of a beauty and the beauty of a modernity which heretofore he had felt himself incapable of realising. Up to this point, indeed, Basil had restricted himself to portraiture "in the costume of dead ages";⁹⁵ the "great turning-point in his art"⁹⁶ had come in Basil's portrayal of Dorian "in [his] own dress and in [his] own time".⁹⁷ The secret in question, at this stage, has a double import, since as Basil phrases it, it is "the secret of [his] own soul",⁹⁸ a matter of æsthetics, of the artist's relation to his art, and one that leads him to wish not to exhibit the picture. It is also the secret Basil wants to keep from Lord Henry, Dorian's name, personality, personal attractiveness, which is a matter of ethics;

it leads him to desire that Henry not exercise his bad influence on Dorian.⁹⁹ Basil's secret is Dorian himself and is also in the picture of Dorian Gray. Basil, however, substitutes for his jealousy of Dorian, a jealousy of his art, in which he fears he has revealed too much of himself. His confusion of the portrait for the thing portrayed reveals the central secret substitution on which the novel turns.

Basil cannot for long refrain from mentioning Dorian's name and Henry's appreciation of the portrait Basil has painted in word and in deed encourages him to demand a meeting with its model, which occurs more or less by chance as Dorian arrives at the studio. Henry immediately sees in Dorian the very qualities Basil has pictured for him: Dorian is an innocent. Meanwhile, the author has been leaving other clues as to Dorian's nature seemingly ignored or put out of mind by Basil and Henry, confronted with his picturesque beauty and youth. He is wilful and capricious, "Dorian's whims are laws to everybody, except himself."¹⁰⁰ He is even vain and hurtful: Basil complains in giving his soul to Dorian, he has given his soul "to someone who treats it as if it were a flower to put in his coat, a bit of decoration to charm his vanity, an ornament for a summer's day."¹⁰¹ But both young men are blinded by Dorian's beauty to his faults.

Henry sets about ingratiating himself with Dorian by expounding at length on the subject of the immoral influence imputed to him. To deny influence is to deny the self-realization which "each

of us is here for".¹⁰² Self-denial is a greater evil than immorality, since, Henry says, "Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us."¹⁰³ The author, typically, has his characters explore the sins of which he himself is accused. Wilde once felt constrained by an unkind critique of his novel to compare himself with its protagonists, "Basil Hallward is what I think I am. Lord Henry what the world thinks of me."¹⁰⁴ And one could add, not least the critics who see his work as poisoned by the impulses he denied himself, by the desires he repressed. Dorian responds to Henry's diatribe as if it "had touched some secret chord" in his nature.¹⁰⁵

Henry goes on to echo Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, "Nothing can cure the soul but the senses, just as nothing can cure the senses but the soul ... that is one of the great secrets of life."¹⁰⁶ He elaborates on Pater's eulogy to the senses, proclaiming "A new Hedonism", for which Dorian might serve as the "visible symbol".¹⁰⁷ Dorian is not only being influenced by Henry and Basil, he is being cultivated to undertake the role both have constructed for him. For Basil, Dorian declares in his person "a new mode of style",¹⁰⁸ that the painter in his portrait has merely depicted, as it is. Dorian's is the beauty of modern man, he epitomizes the dandy. Henry sees in Dorian and elicits from him the self-consciousness of the dandy, who is "what our century wants";¹⁰⁹ he makes Dorian aware of his "Youth" and "Beauty".¹¹⁰ But Henry also sees himself as merely facilitating Dorian's self-realization as what he is; Henry is no Mephistopheles. And

Dorian reacts to Henry by thinking only that the latter has revealed to him his own life's mystery.¹¹¹ Stanley Cavell in a context dealing with the 'untellable' in philosophy as being philosophy's object, says that philosophy is so "fixated on telling what cannot be told ... not because it is a secret but because it could not be a secret - like my being human".¹¹² Dorian's secret similarly could not be a secret and for this reason he immediately trusts in it. He delivers himself up to an awareness of a Beauty, which may be superficial, but as Henry points out, is at least "not so superficial as Thought is".¹¹³ Henry legitimizes Dorian's realization of himself as he appears: he reveals to Dorian "The true mystery of the world" as being "the visible, not the invisible".¹¹⁴ But the visible is only a revelation where it is a mystery.

For example, Carter Ratcliff promotes the work of Ad Reinhardt as displaying the dandyfication of the picture plane. Reinhardt's black paintings of the 1950s through to 1967 aspire simply to the æstheticization of black: He wanted to "eliminate the religious ideas about black", and to replace them with "strictly æsthetic notions".¹¹⁵ Lord Henry Wotton seems to posit the same progress, from the conventionally profound idea of Thought to the superficial notion of Beauty. It is hence ironic that the problem regarded by certain viewers as inherent in Reinhardt's black paintings is their "mystical or transcendental quality. Although Reinhardt vehemently denied any such intention."¹¹⁶ The equation between Lord Henry's position and Reinhardt's is, however,

incomplete. The paintings reveal a mysterious visibility; they are empty, uniform and monotonous black squares; and Lucy Lippard in her book on Reinhardt quotes Berdyaev, "the bourgeois is precisely the person who invariably prefers the visible to the invisible":¹¹⁷ but these paintings present the invisible as a revelation, the visible as a mystery. The revelation is in the liminal colouring and sectioning of the blackness the perception of which, in their meticulously built-up matt surfaces, may be deferred by up to ten minutes. Perhaps this is what Lord Henry leaves unstated, or perhaps would vehemently deny. But when he tells Dorian that only shallow people do not judge by appearances,¹¹⁸ the latter adopts Henry's dictum as an article of self-knowledge. Being himself young, Dorian might have found a note of caution in Wilde's "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young," "Only the shallow know themselves."¹¹⁹

Linda Dowling in *Language and Decadence* construes an alternative reading to the psychological one from Wilde's preoccupation with secrecy. The secret, she explains, derives from a "sense of linguistic autonomy, of written or literary language possessing a dangerous life of its own".¹²⁰ I will return to this; but it is noteworthy here that Dorian frightened and fascinated by what Lord Henry has been telling him suddenly exclaims inwardly, "Words! Mere words! How terrible they were! ... Was there anything so real as words?"¹²¹

Dorian makes a wish that the picture grow old and that he remain always young.¹²² The possibility of the transference is I have suggested

already prefigured in Basil's secret: the portrait for the thing portrayed. Now, precisely, the confusion of Dorian and the picture which has occurred in Basil's "curious artistic idolatory"¹²³ of him is given a literal and dramatic form, since Dorian's wish comes true, and the remainder of the novel is expended in describing the consequences of that phenomenon. The possibility of the transference has also been prefigured by Henry. Basil has just complained, in the manner of the lovelorn, Dorian treats him as though he were nothing more than a buttonhole for a summer's day. Henry voices the opinion that Basil's sense of æsthetics will lead him to tire first of the liaison. "Some day," he says, "you will look at your friend, and he will seem to you to be a little out of drawing, or you won't like his tone of colour, or something. You will bitterly reproach him in your heart."¹²⁴ Henry continues that it will be the end of something like a romance, and a pity, except it will have been less a romance of the heart than a "romance of art".¹²⁵ Dorian expresses the same concern upon making his wish, "How long will you like me?"¹²⁶ Basil's picture, he claims, has taught him to value his good looks above everything. He is partially correct: Basil's picture and Henry's speeches have taught him the transcendental value of the transient. He declares his jealousy of his own portrait,¹²⁷ an ironic gesture considering Basil's own jealousy of his art. A piece of brief violent action occurs which seems almost insignificant until, near the end of the novel, with the roles reversed, it is reiterated. Basil, only semi-conscious of what he is doing, grabs a palette-knife, to destroy the painting; "I will not let it come across

our three lives and mar them," he says.¹²⁸ Dorian stops him, crying, "It would be murder!"¹²⁹ Basil halts and with his artistic vanity takes this as a sign Dorian has at last come to appreciate his work. He facetiously remarks to Dorian, "as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished, and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself."¹³⁰ Eleven chapters later, Dorian watches Basil's reaction to the now utterly transfigured portrait. He takes the flower out of his coat, to which Basil had so long ago compared himself, and smells it, or, not even that, pretends to;¹³¹ soon after, Dorian grabs a knife and murders Basil Hallward.¹³²

The Sophists were, if we are to believe Plato, the first dandy philosophers.¹³³ Stanley Rosen writes in his *Plato's Symposium*, "The Sophist praises only what he believes the audience will find praiseworthy, regardless of its truth or virtue."¹³⁴ If one add that the audience referred to means the specific dandyfied audience of the dandy's circle of initiates, the description is applicable to the dandy, and to Lord Henry Wotton. The Sophists did not philosophise to establish truths, but to win arguments, by eristic, or to disestablish accepted truths, through antilogic. The primers in sophistry of the fifth century B.C. consisted of commonplaces, often antithetical in nature. They were phrases to be learnt by heart rather than whole speeches,¹³⁵ bearing some resemblance to Wilde's collections of aphorisms, his "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young" and "A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-

Educated". Lord Henry Wotton's employment of epigram and paradox has the same antithetical impulse running through it. In one "brilliant, fantastic, irresponsible" improvisation, enhanced by Dorian's grave and wondering gaze, Henry's praise of folly soars into a philosophy. He is talking about the reclamation of one's youth, "one of the great secrets of life"; he wings the idea with paradox and makes it iridescent with fancy, transfixing the dinner-guests at Lady Agatha's.¹³⁶ Soon, Dorian will remark that he is putting Lord Henry's ideas into practice, "as I do everything that you say."¹³⁷ Dorian is seemingly immune to the calculated irony and inconsequentiality of Henry's sophisms. When Henry himself is asked if he meant all he said, he replies, "I quite forgot what I said. ... Was it all very bad?"¹³⁸

Henry's ethics are, as he says of Dorian's, ostensibly founded on a "charming æsthetic basis".¹³⁹ It is an ethics, or anti-ethics, Plato might have condemned in the same way he condemned the sophistry of his forebears, since it posits a relativism at odds with the rigid moral categories of Platonic idealism. However, Plato's own thinking itself bears the imprint of the Sophists. Sophocles, the gadfly, was allegedly a member of the second Sophistic school.¹⁴⁰ And Wilde has Lord Henry call Plato, "that artist in thought," in the middle of a meditation on the "symbolical value" the things of life assume for those to whom is awarded, as to Basil Hallward, the painter, "that wonderful vision" of perfect form, which Plato first analysed.¹⁴¹

Despite the appearance that his ethical irresponsibility stem from the Æstheticist or Decadent creed, Henry privately prefers the methods of natural science, applied to the subject-matter of human life: "he had begun by vivisectioning himself, as he had ended by vivisectioning others."¹⁴² (He prefers, that is, an anæsthetics to an æsthetics.) He urges on Dorian a sort of moral experimentation. Men, he has said, "represent the triumph of mind over morals"; women "represent the triumph of matter over mind".¹⁴³ This last perhaps explains Henry's assertion that women desire to be dominated,¹⁴⁴ by bringing it into the domain of his scientificity: women as matter are the stuff science sets out to dominate. Furthermore, women are of course æsthetic creatures, a "decorative sex. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly."¹⁴⁵ In this they resemble the Dorian Gray in whom Basil has been assured the vision of Platonic form, because Dorian is "the merely visible presence", "unconscious of it all."¹⁴⁶ Henry resolves to dominate Dorian, "a subject made to his hand."¹⁴⁷ But it is significant that Henry resolves also to be to Dorian what Dorian was to Basil, a means of revelation. Afterall, Dorian revealed to the painter the modernity of beauty. Henry will be the means by which Dorian comes to a self-consciousness that allows him to dominate over himself, and others, over his beauty and over the modern age; to become a dandy.

Dorian has, however, been made "premature" in his self-consciousness, a fact Henry savours as the sign of the younger man's initiation by the

older man into the "mysteries of life", which have been revealed to the former "before the veil was drawn away".¹⁴⁸ Dorian yet retains his youthful passion and impetuosity (his sudden announcement of his engagement to the actress, Sybil Vane, bears witness to this), but under Henry's influence his desires are being cultivated and his tastes developed for more than youthful pleasures. Sybil has awoken in Dorian the sort of complex passion for which he has been prepared by Henry; "What there was in it of the purely sensuous instinct of boyhood had been transformed by the workings of imagination, changed into something that seemed to the lad himself to be remote from sense, and was for that reason all the more dangerous."¹⁴⁹ Henry ponders that exposure to art can have this effect and that sometimes a "complex personality", such as his own, may come to fulfil the same function as art.¹⁵⁰ For Dorian, Henry represents a new mode of experience in life, just as for Basil, Dorian represented a new mode of expression in art.

The prevailing atmosphere of aristocratic idleness surrounding these rather elevated proceedings is suddenly interrupted by the entry into the story of Sybil Vane's natural milieu, ironically unnatural, since her milieu is the theatre. Wilde deals, in mock-grandiloquent style, with the pretensions of Sybil Vane's lower class family. Her mother is presented so that, "The waving of crooked, false-jewelled fingers [gives] grotesqueness to [her] words."¹⁵¹ Her hands are "bismuth-whitened", a cosmetic used in the theatre; she is jaded by the melodrama and offstage still

continues to play to an imaginary gallery. She possesses a "shallow secret nature" which is troubled by the roughness of her son, James;¹⁵² he has rejected the theatre in favour of sailing to Australia. Sybil declares her love for a gentleman who regularly visits the theatre, whom she calls Prince Charming, since despite his attentions to Sybil, he has not given his name.¹⁵³ James vows to kill this gentleman should he do Sybil any wrong, but the only name he has is Prince Charming, "you should never forget it," says Sybil.¹⁵⁴ James introduces the subplot of a botched revenge running through the latter half of the story. His jealousy leads him to perceive a threat to his sister posed by the immoral influence of Dorian Gray, repeating in transposition the threat of Henry's bad influence on Dorian as perceived by Basil. James wrests from his mother before he leaves for his ship the secret that his and Sybil's father had also been a gentleman and had not married their mother, had not lived long enough to make provision for them.¹⁵⁵ The secret of Dorian's own past, Lord Henry discovers from his uncle, mirrors this episode. Dorian's mother had eloped and married a penniless soldier, whom her father had engineered to have killed in a duel soon after the marriage: as Henry inwardly æstheticizes the incident, "Behind every exquisite thing that existed, there was something tragic."¹⁵⁶

Dorian arranges to have his two friends attend a performance by Sybil Vane of *Romeo and Juliet*. Basil is naturally concerned at the prospect of Dorian marrying beneath him in intellect or

nature. Henry says, "she is better than good - she is beautiful," or so Dorian alleges and, "he is not often wrong about things of that kind. [The] portrait has quickened his appreciation of the personal appearance of other people. It has had that excellent effect, amongst others."¹⁵⁷ Indeed, when speaking of her virtues, Dorian has dwelt on her beauty, on her visible presence, on the costumes she has worn, of every age. He has compared her to ordinary women, "There is no mystery in any of them," since, "They are limited to their own century."¹⁵⁸ He has concluded, "that the only thing worth loving is an actress."¹⁵⁹ When the "hideous Jew" managing the theatre had asked if Dorian wanted to be taken backstage to meet her, he at first refused, remarking only how curious it was not to want to know her. The Jew had wanted to tell Dorian her history, but he was not interested. He had met her, and Dorian reported, "She regarded me merely as a person in a play."¹⁶⁰ Henry called it a "curious romance" and not quite what he expected.¹⁶¹ Dorian's romance recalls Basil's, also not quite expected by Henry. This would be unremarkable but that chapter five has intervened to show the simplicity and innocence of Sybil Vane, against her mother's mock-theatricality. Dorian has fallen in love with Sybil's various portrayals, with her Rosalind, her Ophelia, her Imogen, just as Basil with the portrait. (She) also is quite unconscious of the effect wrought by Sybil Vane's visible presence on the stage,¹⁶² as Dorian of Dorian Gray's on the canvas. He says of her, "Lips that Shakespeare taught to speak have whispered their secret in my ear."¹⁶³ And though he does not make a secret of

his idolatory, similarly artistic to Basil's, it is exactly a secret that has led him to love her, the secret of Sybil's beauty. Dorian even compares her to a Tanagra figurine in Basil's studio.¹⁶⁴ He earlier compared himself to Basil's ivory Hermes and his silver Faun.¹⁶⁵ Basil's studio is, of course, and should be the most propitious place for an æsthetic mystery to have its origin.

The complexity of Dorian's passion for Sybil and the inherent danger Henry has discerned in it connotes the emergence in Dorian of what Wilde elsewhere - in the "The Critic as Artist" - names the "æsthetic sense". For Dorian, beauty is an end in itself. It provides a motive of which he is not fully aware and, as Henry states, one most likely to tyrannize over him.¹⁶⁶ This motive leads him to pursue and to adopt as his credo what he later calls the spiritualization of the senses. Dorian sees Sybil as sacred and untouchable and Henry asserts it is only the sacred things that are worth touching.¹⁶⁷ Dorian, in a sense, unwittingly deceives himself about his love by not recognising in it the complexity his consciousness of beauty - which here equates perfectly with self-consciousness - has bestowed upon it. Beauty is a material attribute as well as an indeterminately cognitive or intellectual activity.¹⁶⁸ From Henry he has learnt to authorize the æsthetic over the ethical, but has not learnt the danger of carrying art into action,¹⁶⁹ or of identifying beauty as purely material. Henry says, it is always so with love, one "begins by deceiving oneself, and one ends always ends by deceiving others."¹⁷⁰

Dorian feels, in a proleptic moment, of such as the novel is full, "the man who could wrong [Sybil] would be a beast, a beast without a heart,"¹⁷¹ which is in part what Dorian turns out to be. Not only does he "shame the thing he loves",¹⁷² but much later he is reminded by his portrait of some lines from *Hamlet*,

"Like the painting of a sorrow,
A face without a heart."¹⁷³

Henry, as they await the cabs which will take them to the theatre, goes some way to explaining the idolatory Basil and Dorian have in common. Pleasure being the only thing worth having a theory about, to adore is a greater pleasure than to be adored; "Being adored is a nuisance. Women treat us just as Humanity treats its gods. They worship us."¹⁷⁴ Henry attributes to 'women' the æsthetic idolatory shared by Basil and Dorian. The latter, for example, wants to place Sybil on a pedestal of gold and to see the world worship her.¹⁷⁵ "When Sybil comes on the stage you will have a new ideal of life," he promises.¹⁷⁶ Henry returns that he loves acting because it is so much more real than life; rather than because it adds to life what life itself lacks.¹⁷⁷ The other two would be the truer Platonists, if Plato were the artist in thought Henry describes. Both governed by an æsthetic sense that sets beauty above all as the greatest good and that finds in it exclusively the secret of existence, their lives would be effectively foreclosed by discovering in life's most obvious attribute, the visible world, the perfection they seek. This foreclosure would render the natural

artificial and the artificial natural and would take for phantasmagorias the apparitions of life and for truths the apparitions of art. Such, however, is not entirely the case, despite Henry's insights. Henry himself, more the Decadent, anæsthetized by the experience of all the pleasures life may afford, no longer possesses idols and is no longer capable of love. Sybil has said, "To be in love is to surpass oneself."¹⁷⁸ By extension, to be in love is to surpass consciousness of self, to surpass the revelations and apparitions of the mind, to surpass visible beauty, despite and because it is ideal. Dorian answers her meaning when he says to Henry, "the mere touch of Sybil Vane's hand makes me forget you and all your wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories."¹⁷⁹

Henry goes some way to making an explanation because he is wrong, wrong about his friends principally. He leads the superficial existence of the truly objective, hence life holds nothing for him but disappointment. Responding to a critique claiming his characters have no counterpart in real life, Wilde writes, there is only one artistic error in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which is that it has a terrible moral: "Basil Hallward, worshipping physical beauty far too much ... dies by the hand of one in whose soul he has created a monstrous and absurd vanity. Dorian Gray, having led a life of mere sensation and pleasure, tries to kill conscience, and at that moment kills himself. Lord Henry Wotton seeks to be merely the spectator of life. He finds that those who reject the battle are more deeply wounded

than those who take part in it."¹⁸⁰ What is most important here is Henry's disbarment from participating in the action as Wilde conceived it. Henry provides a commentary on the events of the novel as they occur which in turn produces effects on the development of those events. But he is often wrong in his appraisals: he functions as a combination Greek chorus and false conscience. One remains sympathetic to him because one appreciates his irony. His position in relation to the events of the novel is, however, in sum as well as in part ironic. He is both distant from and involved in what eventuates. His involvement brings to the various actions and movements of the story a self-consciousness mitigated by his distance from them, which makes that consciousness unreliable and ironic. He has compared himself, in the context of his influence on and domination over Dorian, to art, to, specifically, the art of literature which deals "immediately with the passions and the intellect".¹⁸¹ He is, therefore, like a work of literature within the work of literature, and himself the 'beyond' of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that the general immanence of secrecy seems to imply. But in that he is also subject to the same time as what occurs, in that he is in contiguity with and contingent on the actions he describes, he resembles another type of art. Wilde wrote, the pictorial arts know nothing of death, because they know nothing of life; "the secrets of life and death belong to those, and to those only, whom the sequence of time affects, and who possess not merely the present but the future Movement, that problem of the visible arts, can be truly

realized by Literature alone."¹⁸² Lord Henry resembles more a picture, without the possibility of transcending its temporal context and the history in which it finds itself. It may be said, he is the picture of a picture, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The transcendence seemingly at stake as the novel's secret is not found in the character of Lord Henry Wotton. To complete Wilde's self-comparison to his characters, "Basil Hallward is what I think I am. Lord Henry what the world thinks of me. Dorian what I would like to be - in other ages perhaps... In so vulgar an age as this we all need masks."¹⁸³

The three arrive at the theatre. Dorian and Henry by brougham, Basil by hansom-cab. Time, it should be stated, is highly relative in *Dorian Gray*. Basil, en route, begins to feel he has lost Dorian to 'Life'; as the cab draws to a halt, it seems to him he has grown years older.¹⁸⁴ Time passes at varying rates for the characters. Later, Henry introduces to Dorian a seductively decadent French novel. (This might be the work of literature Lord Henry said he was.) Linda Dowling accounts for the book as belonging to a nineteenth century tradition of 'fatal books', like Marius's *Golden Ass* in Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean* or Huysman's *À Rebours* or Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.¹⁸⁵ She finds that these books stand for language itself, as metaphors of its dangerous autonomy, upon the discoveries and extrapolations from the study of 'dead' languages of contemporary philology. As for Jacques Derrida, writing for this tradition is the decisive form for language and gives it a mysterious life of its own, outside of time. Dowling

writes, "hours pass unheeded as Dorian reads, and "years" pass as we read of his reading."¹⁸⁶

Sybil enters in the role of Juliet. Just as Dorian has promised, she is exquisite to look at. She moves "like a creature from a finer world", "through the crowd of ungainly, shabbily dressed actors." But her speech is "thoroughly artificial".¹⁸⁷ Her performance is a horrible disappointment. She makes the passion of Juliet unreal. She appears to be "absolutely self-contained" in her artificiality and stageyness, and even her usual, plebeian audience begins to whistle and hiss.¹⁸⁸ The "consummate art-instinct" Dorian had identified in her is not at all to be seen.¹⁸⁹ She alone is unmoved by the appalling reaction of the audience. Basil hazards that perhaps she is ill, Dorian answers he wishes it were so; she seems to him callous and cold, where the previous night there had been a great artist this night there is "merely a commonplace".¹⁹⁰ She is artificial because she acts badly, when she had acted well she had been to Dorian not just real but ideal and beautiful. Basil and Henry get up to leave. Both attempt to console Dorian, the one by saying, "Love is a more wonderful thing than Art," the other by saying, "She is beautiful. What more can you want?"¹⁹¹ Their consolations are useless, Dorian cries his heart is breaking, and Henry finally ushers Basil out of the theatre, "a strange tenderness in his voice."¹⁹² He is perhaps moved to sympathy by an emotion he understands - Dorian's disenchantment. But his charity is somehow misplaced. Dorian's dilemma is not simply his loss of innocence faced

with the truth about his ideal, his love, but the injury he has suffered to his vanity. When describing his passion for Sybil, Dorian had asked of Henry his advice, as of one who knows all the secrets of life.¹⁹³ Henry continually reveals the secrets of human nature, and says so; it is clear from the outset, however, he does not know Dorian's own nature. Dorian had declared he wanted to make Romeo jealous, and to awaken the ashes of the dead lovers of the world into pain.¹⁹⁴ Henry took his hyperbolic assertions to mean he had merely overcome his shyness.

Dorian has won Sybil's heart. He has, in a sense, made Romeo jealous. But the play ends in fiasco, the audience having almost completely vacated the theatre. Sybil is radiant as he arrives backstage, her lips, "smiling over some secret of their own."¹⁹⁵ She is proud she acted badly, galling Dorian all the more. She seems unaware that she has embarrassed him. By making herself look ridiculous, she has made him look ridiculous. She explains how his love has made her realise the hollowness of her stage roles, the sham of Beatrice's joy and of Cordelia's sorrows. Sybil has rejected as artificial not only her Juliet, but also her Juliet to Dorian's Romeo. She has in effect rejected him.

She had thought her portrayals real, suddenly she had been made conscious that Romeo was hideous, and old, and painted.¹⁹⁶ Dorian had brought her "something higher, something of which all art is but a reflection".¹⁹⁷ The theatre she had always taken for reality was revealed to be an "empty pageant",¹⁹⁸ and he has been responsible. It

would have been a profanation for her to play at being in love and she had found herself incapable and unwilling to do so. He has ironically through the reality of the love he has inspired in her awoken her to the artifice that was all for which he loved her. She has substituted for the æstheticized context, in which he had placed her, life, for the æstheticized object he had seen her as, life, and for the spectacle he had wanted her life to resemble, she will later substitute death. And as Dorian later says of her, "she acted badly because she had known the reality of love. When she knew its unreality, she died, as Juliet might have died."¹⁹⁹

He responds, "You have killed my love."²⁰⁰ She is shallow and stupid, he says, because she has thrown away her art, wherein lay the genius and intellect, that had attracted Dorian, that he had thought her truth. "Without your art you are nothing."²⁰¹ Her disbelief is such, she thinks him to be acting. He is not - at least not in any way she would understand - and she falls at his feet in a "fit of passionate sobbing".²⁰² "Sybil Vane seemed to [Dorian] to be absurdly melodramatic."²⁰³

Eventually, Dorian returns home. He notices that the portrait has altered: there is "a touch of cruelty in the mouth".²⁰⁴ He, of course, cannot credit it at first, and goes to remove his buttonhole. But it is certainly changed. He remembers his wish in Basil's studio, and is at once conscience-stricken over his treatment of Sybil. "Why had he been made like that?", he asks and begins recalling Henry's dicta on the subject of women. Lord Henry "knew what women were", Dorian thinks. "When

they took lovers, it was merely to have someone with whom they could have scenes."²⁰⁵

Henry is present to the plot even when he is not physically present in the story. He is like Dorian for Basil's painting, a suggestion of a new manner, never more present than when no image of him is there.²⁰⁶ If he represents the self-consciousness of the novel, as I have said, his consciousness is not continuous with it, rather consciousness of his suggestion, of his image, is coextensive with its development. Just as the dandy's influence upon taste and fashion springs from his symbolic intervention, so Lord Henry's influence occurs at a symbolic level. The dandy places fashion under the governance of taste by the device of style. He is always modern. Lord Henry's thoroughgoing presence in *Dorian Gray* is similarly a stylistic if not a structural device appertaining to the modernity Wilde sought to present in his work. The place of women is an aspect of that modernity having a singular significance in the dandiacal scheme of the work, and in the larger scheme of the theory of dandyism.

Sybil Vane constitutes for Dorian the very type of the women Henry has been telling him about. She appeals to him as a literalization of the ideal patterns of womanliness Henry describes: She is merely her masks. As an actress, she is the medium for art's articulation. Hence, the natural artificiality of women is simply heightened in her. Without her art she is nothing. Now Henry, even upon Dorian's disenchantment with his ideal, holds to Sybil's decorativeness: though she can't act, she

remains beautiful.²⁰⁷ This throws up the difference between the two. Dorian is true to the style of Henry's utterance. He tries to make that style true, at least. That is, he confuses Henry's style, which is general throughout all he says, with his substance, which is particular to divergent contexts. Henry's sophistry leads him to improvise within the parameters of a general style, subject only to his audience's appreciation. What does it signify to him if his absurdities be taken seriously? Only that it creates fit matter for observation - from a distance. Once that distance is lost, as Wilde implies is the case with Dorian, there is the possibility of being wounded.²⁰⁸

The jilted Sybil Vane suicides. Henry bears the news to Dorian. He ascribes the tragedy to Sybil's instinctive sense of drama, which is that of all women: they would have every comedy end in tragedy and every tragedy end in farce.²⁰⁹ Sybil's *Romeo and Juliet* ended in farce and her life's drama, that of her love for her Prince Charming, ended in death. "[Women] are charmingly artificial, but they have no sense of art," Henry says.²¹⁰ Sybil's life constitutes art, self-contained in its artificiality: this is how Dorian must reconcile her suicide, according to Henry. She was to Dorian, "always a dream, a phantom that flitted through Shakespeare's plays and left them lovelier for its presence."²¹¹ Dorian's exculpation is complete, since to blame himself would be inconsistent with the æstheticized nature of the complex passion he bore Sybil. Dorian finds Henry's argument convincing. He does not recognise that to maintain consistency is

to reinforce and perpetuate a role Henry has contrived for him. Dorian's solitary motive is to ease his conscience. He does not recognise the implication of his becoming like ~~to~~ Sybil in his relation to Lord Henry's Prince Charming. Henry continues, "[Sybil] never really lived, so she never really died."²¹² She provided a wonderful modern spectacle, nothing more.²¹³

Woman-as-spectacle is a topos ever more familiar with the contemporary construction of theories that account for its immanence in culture, if not explain it. It was familiar to Wilde, perhaps not in its current political and theoretical context, but certainly in the social context of popular æsthetics, which takes the beauty of the 'fair sex' as its standard. The reading Lord Henry gives gender would, therefore, seem a remarkable anticipation of later readings of sexual difference, such as those outlined in Teresa de Lauretis's "The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations of Representation and Gender".²¹⁴ Her purpose in this essay is to point out how philosophical and theoretical discourse, from Nietzsche to Derrida, has misappropriated the position of 'woman' as the "locus of enunciation".²¹⁵ It has done so in order to extend a strategem. It has assumed the place of woman as a rhetorical function, a constantly and strategically shifting place from which to speak, "a construct, which - call it difference, displacement, negativity, internal exclusion - has perhaps become the foremost rhetorical trope of recent philosophical speculation."²¹⁶ This fictive construct, de Lauretis argues, contains a reading of 'woman', that in

despite of the declared project of these writers to criticize phallocentrism derives from a phallocentric insight: "[Deconstructive discourse] takes the woman as model because, as [Gayatri] Spivak reads (Derrida reading) Nietzsche, the woman can fake orgasm, while the man cannot."²¹⁷ She allegedly has a natural propensity for faking the man lacks; or, her nature is fake(s).

Sybil Vane never really lived, never really died. She too recalls Wilde's lines on the visible arts:²¹⁸ She is a picture, out of reach of movement and unaffected by time. Wilde said, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was about the decorative arts. Women constitute exemplary decorativeness. Not only are they good to look at, what they say is also decorative, charming and meaningless. Teresa de Lauretis agrees, saying, "the question of woman for the male philosophers is a question of style (of discourse, language, writing - of philosophy)."²¹⁹ On the other hand, for present-day feminist thinking, it is not so much a question of philosophy, as one of gender, of the "social construction of "woman" and "man"". ²²⁰ But, regardless of what gender the present-day thinker wants to dispose of or insist on, both understandings of the 'woman question' posit as fundamental a way of representing, representing gender. According to de Lauretis, female thinkers need to find a way of "representing, or reconstructing our bodies otherwise".²²¹ This assertion seems to collapse all too readily into the master-trope she has located in male-dominated philosophizing, a function of rhetoric, gender as a matter of style and a style of

matter. Although, she says, Lévi-Strauss (1969) "naïvely and traditionally" articulates the construct of sexual difference (woman as pure exchange-value, as signifying to what is signified, man - as signifying nought in sum), his naïve and traditional articulation, the structural myth, is perpetuated in post-structuralist discourse in terms of a "becoming woman" common to Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari and, it would appear, to feminist thinkers.²²² It still simply depends on social and political and psychological representation and self-representation. She writes, "Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, *matris* and matter."²²³ Or, as Lord Henry puts it, "Women represent the triumph of matter over mind," "[men] have emancipated them, but they remain slaves looking for their masters, all the same. They love being dominated."²²⁴

Stanley Cavell complicates the picture. He suggests the male philosopher can adopt at will the tone of the feminine, but that he chooses, wilfully, to 'closet' it.²²⁵ Cavell writes in his "'Postscript'" to an essay handling the feminine man, "an alternative way to understand closeting is as the maintenance not of the place the man cannot leave, the space of what is not his to say, but (also, before that) the place he cannot let the woman leave, the space of what he does not want, and wants, her to say."²²⁶ Elsewhere in "'Postscript'" he has admitted certain misgivings about the fact of philosophy starting in a cave and subsequently the cave being in us.²²⁷ Not only that, the fathers of philosophy

were pæderasts.²²⁸ Cavell's closeting, whether his own or somebody else's, introduces a factor disruptive of the standard opposition of irreconcilables, because disruptive of the notion that the male ego stands to itself in a relation of undifferentiated masculine self-presence. Gender is always complicated by sexuality. Men have always been at stake in the 'woman question'. Cavell writes, "As we learn to distrust our attribution to women of depth and mystery, seeing its uses in denying their reality, we seem to get awfully attached to asserting the superficiality of men."²²⁹

Women by the end of the nineteenth century had begun proposing their own beauty in terms incommensurate with the notion that it provided a popular æsthetic standard. At a time when 'women' was becoming the title preferred by women to the 'fair sex' or ladies, which smacked of a certain pretension and preciosity, such a notion was viewed as tainted with the vulgarity of all standardization, and viewed as patronizing. The notion, of course, today, has not been entirely debunked, but it remains predominantly the domain of the vulgar, the advertising media and cheaper magazines. Wilde in his editorship of *The Woman's World*, which had been, *The Lady's World: A Magazine of Fashion and Society*, set out to cater for women of intellect, culture and position. He felt it a higher standpoint to deal not only with dress and cosmetics, but also with what women think.²³⁰ Women proposed their beauty in terms also of health and professionalism. The "loveliest woman in Europe", Lillie Langtry, matched her loveliness

with ambition, and the status of such as Sarah Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, Helen Modjeska, was a function of professional ability as much as physical beauty.²³¹ Women, like Constance Wilde, proposed beauty in dress in terms of ease and comfort, with the model of Ancient Greece in mind. Lord Henry Wotton makes his remarks on women at a period of their progressive emancipation from either a fully decorative or fully functional role. Although the former retained an aristocratic connotation missing from the latter, there is a sense in which the mere visible beauty of women was being assimilated to its utility in commercial culture, in the etiologies of the marketplace. Fashion was becoming the fashion industry, wherein the visible was becoming the image, a representation, governed by a way of representing.

It is telling that in the climactic chapters of *Dorian Gray*, a character enters who is "too clever for a woman", the Duchess of Monmouth, Gladys.²³² She is Henry's equal in wit and intellect, and the episodes of their sparring together are interspersed with those describing Dorian's accelerating state of malaise. She is half in love with Dorian.²³³ Her duels with Henry have the double attribute of enlivening the turgid scenes of Dorian's decline and also of dramatizing the battle for possession of Dorian, paralleled in the symbolic battle for Dorian between Basil and Henry. The Duchess of Monmouth challenges Lord Henry to describe women as a sex, "Sphinxes without secrets," he replies.²³⁴ Under Henry's guidance, Dorian has progressed from Sybils to Sphinxes.

The aristocratic connotation of the decorative is decisive for the dandy as a factor eminently suited to be turned back on itself. The dandy's use of popular culture is ironic, inconsequential and yet effective in promoting the dandiacal gesture over the dominant discourse. Pop, kitsch and camp share with dandiacal logic a faculty of instituting an hierarchy of taste which inverts the hierarchies of their immediate cultural context. Pop discovers beauty in common household appliances, items and iconography. Kitsch makes shit good.²³⁵ Camp finds beauty beyond gender. And Lord Henry has developed for the most superficial of qualities the most profound appreciation. He instils in Dorian Gray a longing for a "world in which things ... have other secrets",²³⁶ and such a world is implicit in his, dandyism's, revelation of the mysterious in the visible.

Oscar Wilde made a claim for *The Picture of Dorian Gray* being about decorative art,²³⁷ a claim not without its own ironies. Henry's viewpoint, in its seeming anticipation of a theory that would account for woman-as-decor, woman-as-wallpaper, or plot-space, might constitute the story as an extended metaphor: 'woman' as the matter of *Dorian Gray*. However, gender only enters Henry's dandiacal theorizing in the service of another imagery, by way of illustrating an æsthetic sense.²³⁸ As Cavell implies, there are potential ambivalences that belie the monolithic opposition of genders, making them easier to wear as options (if not visible options).²³⁹ Such ambivalences are at work in the relations among the three chief

protagonists of *Dorian Gray*, not the least being those of love and jealousy. They take turns dominating over each other: Dorian over Basil, Henry over Dorian. The invulnerable Lord Henry has the weakness of assuming he is not part of the action, when he is in fact. He projects the dominant imagery of spectator and spectacle, dandy and decor. Ultimately it is Dorian who dominates over all, for two reasons. Firstly, the features with which Henry overlays the events are ultimately true only of Dorian. Secondly, the spectacle of Dorian's life dominates the novel. Being entitled *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, one may infer a reciprocity between these two levels. Dorian's life as what *Dorian Gray* in its totality presents is present in its representation, *The Picture*. "It had received the news of Sybil Vane's death before he had known of it himself. It was conscious of the events of life as they occurred."²⁴⁰

Dorian dismisses women as Henry's area of expertise. But the picture "held the secret of his life and told his story. It had taught him to love his own beauty." And Dorian fears it will "teach him to loathe his own soul",²⁴¹ because it will depict his sins on its surface. It will be the "visible emblem" of his conscience.²⁴² He is suddenly overcome by a sense of "infinite pity", distracting him from his remorse over his treatment of Sybil. His pity is not for himself, however, but for the painted image. He regrets his sin out of vanity; hearing of her death tears come to his eyes, but, "He brushed them away hastily and looked again at the picture."²⁴³ He cannot bear the thought of that wondrous beauty

being marred, "the idea of [his] soul [the picture] being hideous."²⁴⁴ Lord Henry remarks, "A very charming æsthetic basis for ethics, Dorian!"²⁴⁵

Equally upsetting, Dorian realises, even if he were good for the rest of his life, he would be witness to the encroaching "hideousness of age".²⁴⁶ It is this last point that makes him decide he really must hide the picture. It must be kept secret from even his closest friends. He begins to find a perverse pleasure in the thought. The picture will enable him to "follow his mind into its secret places".²⁴⁷ It will be to him "the most magical of mirrors".²⁴⁸

Years pass. Dorian remains in narcissistic contemplation of his depicted self. Eventually, Basil is murdered, Sybil is dead, and James Vane, who had tried to avenge his sister's death, is also accidentally shot dead. Henry asks Dorian what is his secret?²⁴⁹ Oscar Wilde in one of his short poems in prose deals with the figure of Narcissus. It is called, "The Disciple," offering an enticing comparison with Dorian's discipleship to Henry. Narcissus dies, and the pool laments, I loved him, "because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw ever my own beauty mirrored."²⁵⁰ Dorian is a Narcissus, locked in identification with and alienation from his reflection, a reflection compounded of the series of self-images or self-portraits he is presented with in *The Picture*. He is held in thrall by his secret, which gives him depth and is concealed, as if otherwise his depth might be taken from him.²⁵¹ He transfixes himself, and the possibility of love,

which may come between us and ourselves, for Dorian dies with the oracular Sybil: he cannot surpass himself. He never moves beyond his mirror-stage. Indeed, his initial joy at discovering his beauty and youth bears all the characteristics of a Lacanian mirror-stage: the authenticating presence of Henry, the æsthetic or symbolic self-revelation, and his assumption of his place in the linguistic order, in the language of the novel. Wilde is, however, preoccupied with a scheme of greater complexity, for the principal image Dorian sees as his secret is a work of art, Dorian's place is an artistic one. As Henry puts it, he has set himself to music, his days are his sonnets, "Life has been your art."²⁵²

The dandy's life is art. More precisely, he is a decorative artist whose medium is his own body.²⁵³ Dorian, were his secret only that of his appearance or the appearance of the picture, would be an incomplete dandy, a cosmetic man, without conscience. For the dandy, surface appearance is not all there is, since it provides the medium of his art, the means to expression of his taste. The symbolic is simply the locus of his intervention. Wilde wrote, "Those whom the gods love grow young."²⁵⁴ Dorian's secret is the conscience which he attempts to sacrifice, ending up killing himself. It is the transcendent beauty of his conscience, transcendent because it is not reducible to simple appearance, or simple selfhood, or an ensuing duality, because it is complex and unknown. "He used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceive the Ego in man as a thing simple,

permanent, reliable, and of one essence. To him, man was a being with a myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature."²⁵⁵ Complex beauty is always to be preferred over simple truth, Wilde wrote in an æsthetic mood. And as another writer insists, "complexity itself, ambiguity itself, is a political posture of profound strength."²⁵⁶

It has been suggested that behind Oscar Wilde's corruscations, behind his myriad masks and positions, there lies a political motive. Isobel Murray in her introduction to Wilde's works assures us there is more to his writings than what is most readily discernible. He is more than "an idle dandy with a cigarette drawling clever epigrams at a society audience",²⁵⁷ or as he has been more cruelly described, "a sort of caricature Dionysus disguised as a rather heavy dandy of the Regency period."²⁵⁸ "If you examine more closely the paradox and irony of an Irishman commended by his great Irish contemporaries for ruthless undercutting of (English) complacency and hypocrisy, another verdict is more likely."²⁵⁹ He is an Irishman, through and through. Moreover, as Michéal MacLiammóir points out, one who would have found greater competition and less publicity on his own green isle.²⁶⁰ He was an ambitious Irishman, who did what all ambitious Irishmen were doing and had done before him, left Ireland. The significance of his geographical provenance and of his Irish soul cannot be gainsaid, no more so his adversarial stance in the Bow Street docks and defense of homosexuality. But the politics of the

dandy, for whom 'irony is a type of genius' (Barbey D'Aurevilly), rests in his cultural opposition, no less than it excludes his simple political partisanship.

Once one has excluded taking sides over the troubles of Ireland or of gays, it is not just the form of the secret informing Dorian Gray's or Oscar Wilde's dandyism, or the form of opposition itself. Because although dandyism might generate paradox, it cannot be reduced to its rhetoric. The secrecy immanent in the novel produces both exemplary reduction and demonstrates such a reduction is only possible in theory. The immanence of secrecy in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is in this way consubstantial with the concealed, secret, picture of Dorian Gray. It permits the conflation of the internal interstices of the novel with its external superfluous, so that the question potentially arises of the whole of *The Picture of Dorian Gray's* secret. What this secret is may be accounted the same as Wilde's own secret, or even rendered paradigmatically as the secret of which no greater can be thought, its very form, the invisible hand of an absconding god. It is possible: a secret may be a refusal, like the refusal by the man of his woman's voice, Cavell speaks of, which "creates the sense that his words, his appeals to the outside are not *answered*. To compensate for this arid silence, you might wish to construct a theory of language that explains that language "must" lack, or is by nature thwarted from - at least an ironic half of the time - the power of reference."²⁶¹ Linda Dowling formulates it thus, "what has emerged in our time as Foucault's theory of discourse or

Derridean deconstruction is none other than that dark spectre of autonomous language that haunted literary Decadence."²⁶² Decadence she defines as a cult of artifice in art and literature,²⁶³ a definition certainly applicable to *Dorian Gray*. Language becomes the supreme artifice: "Words! Mere words!"²⁶⁴

Dowling gives the 'dark spectre' a genealogy, from Locke. She posits Locke, in his "Essay Concerning Human Understanding," as the turning point, from language originating in "sensible Ideas", to thought originating in language. Condillac could, thereafter, claim in his "Essai sur l'origine de connaissances humaines," of 1746, that ideas are associated via, and only via, signs. The genealogy descends through the Neogrammarians to the German Idealists of the nineteenth century, particularly Husserl, and to Saussure's linguistic theory, culminating, she writes, in Jacques Derrida.²⁶⁵ What is the difference, at this point of culmination, between a work of literature celebrating artifice and a work of theory equally celebrating its own artificiality, the arbitrariness of the signs from which it is constructed?

For the character of Dorian Gray, the difference is meaningful. Lord Henry provides part of the answer. He has given Dorian a book, a book that seems to prefigure in its hero Dorian's own life,²⁶⁶ just as later it seems to Dorian that the whole of history prefigures him.²⁶⁷ The picture has initiated a succession of images in which Dorian loses and finds himself - Henry, the book, history - leading into his almost "cosmic hyperchondria".²⁶⁸

On the last night of his life, Dorian complains to Henry of the influence this book has exercised over him. He could be complaining of all the artificial self-disclosures he has suffered. "You poisoned me with a book once," he says.²⁶⁹ Henry answers, there is no such thing as being poisoned by a book, "Art has no influence upon action. It annihilates the desire to act. It is superbly sterile. ... That is all."²⁷⁰

It is, eventually, impossible to find in Wilde's life the secrets of the secrets which beset his writings. The fact is best illustrated in the character of the artist Basil Hallward, to whom Wilde compared himself, as "what I think I am".²⁷¹ Basil begins the novel claiming he cannot exhibit his art, because "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas reveals himself."²⁷² But, decisively, much later, Basil recants, saying, "now I cannot help feeling it is a mistake to think that the passion one feels in creation is ever really shown in the work one creates. Art is always more abstract than we fancy. Form and colour tell us of form and colour - that is all. It often seems to me that art conceals the artist far more completely than it ever reveals him."²⁷³ Basil, hence, adopts a scheme of art, in which art both lacks consequences and bears only oblique reference to the truth of the artist's desire.

Henry, it should be added, tells Dorian how dull he really found Basil. "He only interested me once, and that was when he told me, years ago ...

that you were the dominant motive of his art."²⁷⁴ It is Henry whom Basil described as never saying a moral thing, and never doing a wrong thing. "Your cynicism is simply a pose."²⁷⁵ Henry's pose cannot admit Basil's recantation, just as Dorian's æsthetic sense and belief in the spiritualization of the senses preclude for him the possibility of either the artifice of the pose or the artifice of the portrait.

Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton articulate the difference between the artist and theorist. Dorian Gray's dandyism is the *tertium quid*. In his dandyism Henry's dandyfied theory is reconciled with Basil's dandyfied art. The novel itself recalls the dandiacal parry. It sets its positions in opposition.

The secret of Wilde's art is finally, at least in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, its self-consciousness. It is about art and bespeaks its author's desires insofar as it does not mirror but masks them. "In so vulgar an age as this we all need masks."²⁷⁶ To present Wilde's Irish blood or homosexuality as a revelation of what lies beyond the work, or what the work is about, is to participate in the moral Wilde once noted as being its single flaw. "All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment."²⁷⁷ The function of Dorian's conscience is to exact that punishment for the operative vanity that sees in all objective, æsthetic, visible representations the disclosure of his own secret image.²⁷⁸ Therefore, to reduce or simplify *Dorian Gray* to a single despotic secret is to implicate oneself in its complex moral action. The very image of images, of recent theory, language, becomes, like

the secret of secrets, the unconscious - to which it allegedly bears more than a passing resemblance - potentially the most despotic.²⁷⁹ It proffers perfect disclosure, in its collocation of simple truth with complex beauty, to those, like Dorian, who would desire it. To employ the alliteration favoured by Wilde, *Dorian Gray* presents the moral parody of a model paradigm as a modern parable.

Wilde wrote about decor but did not write decor. What he notes as his work's artistic error, its moral conscience, there is no doubt it was his intention to include.²⁸⁰ To say *Dorian Gray* has a moral conscience is not to say it is Wilde's own conscience, however. His error all the same is the point of entry of his desire into the work, the place of his intervention. What I have named the beautiful secret, its ethical standpoint, is situated beyond the work, not as the authentication of the work's æsthetic economy, or its integrity, but as what truly renders it indecorous; a rude mistake secreted beyond the novel's shifting positions. It is an incongruity, and a structural incongruity, that draws out the implications of and completes the novel, in the sense that it sets it free. It also qualifies its beauty as just, by meting out justice to beauty (which justice is probably more important than freedom), since beauty is in danger of being caught in the mere play of surfaces, as a mode, or, worse, the mode of representation. It is this danger of which Dorian Gray is a victim and this beauty to which he is a martyr. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, its dandyism and dandyism in general, does not lose or gain an iota of its perfection in the closure or

disclosure of its beautiful secret, since what is beyond its perfection is aberrant to it.

V

in which non-entity

strikes an attitude.

The Æstheticist makes a religion of art, the Decadent a cult of artifice.²⁸¹ The Dandy is the artist of life and a religion unto himself; he is by nature artificial and the object of the cult. Gérard Peylet, on the illusions of artifice in fin de siècle literature, writes that the art of the æsthète is an art of negativity. "L'esthète n'est-il pas une sorte d'illusionniste, qui s'amuse à suggérer un autre plan, insolite, qui n'existe pas, au-dessus de la surface d'écrite?" The illusionary quality, in the art of Æstheticism, resides in its suggestion of its discourse having another level to it, one of which Peylet is bound to assert that it does not exist. "[Cet] illusionniste," he continues, "aime souligner l'artifice de sa démarche, et de cette manière il détruit constamment ce qu'il édifie, en renvoyant sa création sur un arrière-plan de néant." This suggestion is a type of wit, since it constantly refuses having taken seriously what is suggested, so that it places the art wholly onto the higher logical level of artifice, which even then cannot be taken seriously, because it is created literally from nothingness, having neither ulterior nor anterior existence, not even an arrière-pensée. He concludes, "Cet art insolite qui aime <<lévite>> au-dessus du réel cristallise toujours une négativité, une absence."²⁸² The art of levitation, which in effect performs as an intersection between

Æstheticism and Decadence, by raising art to the level of artifice, loses any sense of logical consistency or solidity, and becomes paradoxically the crystallization - the hardest physical form - of negativity, of what is not there. Nothingness, that is, transforms itself, through the application of this art, into impenetrable matter. The implication for the dandy lies therein that he is, by his self-cultivation - as art - in a mirror, himself the inert surface or many facets of nothingness, a little jewel. Charles Baudelaire has made the analogy of the dandy as living by the Jesuitical injunction, *Perinde ac cadaver!* As a corpse!²⁸³

The dandiacal is already an amortization, to employ Walter Benjamin's term. The term is central to his mode of criticism. It implies a decontextualization whereby the object of criticism is fragmented and brought into a constellation by the critic. Benjamin saw this mode as necessitated by the culture of modernity, in which the "hint of redemption" is only found in fragments.²⁸⁴ The amortization of a text - in its broadest sense - is a literal deadening as the initial condition facilitative of its constellation. The dandiacal presents its surfaces, whether of text or of cloth, as deadened and thereby liberated to be reconstellated by the dandy, in order to produce effects, or, in Benjamin's terms, in order for truth to be discerned, since truth "is the death of intention".²⁸⁵ Amortization, for the dandy, involves a 'technology of the self' (Michel Foucault), or, simply, a discipline, the discipline of two mirrors. The first is the mirror in which Brummell performed his toilette. Barbey

D'Aurevilly states this could take up to four hours, but the required result was the appearance that it took no time at all. So the second mirror is that reflecting the dandy's impeccable entrance, the mirror Baudelaire talked of as being as vast as a crowd,²⁸⁶ in which the dandy becomes multiplicitous, the mirror of his chosen milieu.

The equation is Cartesian: Stanley Rosen argues Descartes bequeathed to history the dualism of a "mathematical physics" studying the body and a "metaphysics" studying the soul.²⁸⁷ In the one nothing is left to chance, in the other, the dandy is blasé: he possesses a "subtle understanding of all the moral mechanisms of this world", but it is a world from which he affects "cold detachment" as a matter of policy that makes him an aristocrat.²⁸⁸ However, Rosen goes on to postulate between these two a reciprocal influence, borne out in the history of philosophy, transforming it into the philosophy of history. Mathematical physics enacted upon metaphysics a progressive "secularization" reinforcing the status of history. Whereupon the latter's influence, "together with the autonomous tendencies of the mathematizing ego, led to the historicizing of mathematical physics."²⁸⁹ Henceforth, both inward and outward forms of understanding are subject to the rule of radical historicity. "Logic without metaphysics," as Rosen puts it, comes increasingly to mean "epistemology grounded in ideology".²⁹⁰ The ideological superstructure, of the Marxian tradition, Benjamin identifies - sans mediation - with the material and experiential substructure or base.

Benjamin considered the theory of the superstructure to be the final doctrine of metaphorical thinking.²⁹¹ The constellation within its simple heterogeneity comprises both the ideological and the material as amortized, therefore, without differentiation as to level, yet held in the tension of a dialectics of the surface, surfaces. The keynote of Benjamin's thinking is in his affirmation of the messianic, which, in a literal sense, stops history, stops it from elevating itself above the constellation to historicity. The pertinent metaphysical dilemma, intrinsic to Christian eschatology, the Judaic conception of the messianic avoids. According to this conception the messianic is the cessation of historical time, as opposed to an intervention in history.²⁹² Amortization, then, while not antihistorical, works as a dehistoricizing principle. We can say, with Jean Cocteau, "Fashion dies very young so we must forgive her everything."

Walter Benjamin's unfinished magnum opus, *Das Passagen-Werk*, was to take as its model those Parisian arcades of the nineteenth century, where the idle might stroll in reverie amid the sensible confusion of "a whole warlike world ... full of life and silent activity, encampments, bazaars, where samples of every type of supplies are displayed".²⁹³ The solitary promenader is the dandy, characterized by his disinterested interest, and it is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in Rosen's analysis, wishing the transcendence of reason in an æsthetic sensibility, in a self-consciousness that achieves "calm passion" which is true philosophy. Rosen

discusses Rousseau's reverie as the counterpart to David Hume's "phenomenalistic" skepticism, jointly based on the recognition that a world of flux and passage affords no purchase to reason and that the only solace for melancholia - arising inevitably from dissatisfaction with reason - is the phenomenal world.²⁹⁴ Rosen puts the thesis of the discrediting of reason as the principal source of contemporary nihilism, since, for him, the problem of nihilism is only secondarily one of moral or political virtue, such virtue derives from a concept of reason as good. Once moral or political virtue becomes nonrational, reason is no longer a virtue. "[Unless] reason is good, I venture to say that morality has no nature, but is mere conventionalism, or an arbitrary attribution of sense to nonsense."²⁹⁵ Nihilism at base, Nietzsche writes, is the situation obtaining when "everything is permitted", and therefore no act is more reasonably defensible than any other: nothing matters.²⁹⁶ In the *Passagen-Werk*, Benjamin addresses contemporary culture as nihilistic, one in which all goods are equal, none more to be valued than any other. And all, therefore, are emptied of meaning and rendered unreal. "[The creations and forms of life determined by commodity production] present themselves as a phantasmagoria ... The world that is dominated by these phantasmagorias is - in a key word found for it by Baudelaire - the 'Modern'."²⁹⁷ However, unlike Rosen's nihilistic walking man, an underlying political moralism informs the nature of the Clothes-wearing man, the dandy, and the Benjaminian flâneur.

For the flâneur who spends his time in ambulatory contemplation history is accessible to reason as it is incarnate in the life of the world about him. The flâneur neither arrests time nor is he robbed by time of the possibility of reasoning, of finding out the indivisible truth in the divisions of the phenomena surrounding him. His aimless strolling forms the basis of his nonteleological prehension of history by removing time from flux, which is a condition of the category of futurity. The flâneur is essentially backward-looking. To use Benjamin's phrase, the flâneur "blasts open the continuum of history". The future desists in its coming on - its onset creates the sense of a ceaseless and seamless continuum: hence the cessation of historical time and the fact of the flâneur's nonintervention in history. Benjamin called his messianic view, "historical materialism", against the overview proposed by historicism. For Rosen, insistence on such an overview is demonstrated - from Kant on - to be intrinsically nihilistic. "By placing the phenomenal world within time, Kant prepares for the "historicization" of reason; by placing the highest manifestation of reason in faith, he prepares for the "irrationalism" of historicist ontologies."²⁹⁸ Nietzsche and Heidegger come to an agreement, then, that the world is more radically possibility than actuality, since the present is emptied of its own stable content by being defined as a continuous presentation of the future.²⁹⁹ "Historicity," Rosen writes, "or pure possibility is nothingness."³⁰⁰ In contrast, historical materialism, Benjamin states in

his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," makes history "the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now".³⁰¹ Benjamin's editor adds, the now, *die Jetztzeit*, to which Benjamin refers, implies the mystical *nunc stans*, the stationary or amortized moment. It means equally the modern age. The two are coterminous for Benjamin. The constellation, or dialectical image, marks the sudden stoppage of thinking in a configuration pregnant with the tensions of contemporaneity and the past, which stoppage gives the configuration a shock, crystallizing it into a monad, indivisible truth.³⁰² In Baudelaire's words, and conversely, for "any form of modernity [to be] worthy of becoming antiquity the mysterious beauty that human life unintentionally puts into it must have been extracted from it".³⁰³ The process of extraction may be recognised as analogous to the demythologizing process of amortization. It is Baudelaire who again asserts the continuity between fashion and philosophy, his project, he declares, is to set about establishing a rational and historical theory of beauty.³⁰⁴ Baudelaire's theory is in turn supported by beauty's constitution as at once comprising the eternal and the circumstantial. Fashion is, of course, just as much a catalyst in Benjamin's thinking. Its position is reinforced in historical materialism as a decisive aspect of its methodology. Benjamin writes in thesis fourteen on the philosophy of history, "to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked

ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past."³⁰⁵ The elements that go to make up a constellation are in themselves nothing more than those quite circumstantial phenomena the flâneur encounters, those phantasmagorias, Benjamin speaks of, that in their transient and egalitarian contexts give modernity its character. But in the places circumscribed for them by fashion they come to bear also the imprint of history and contain the potential disruption of the continuums in which they were so lately seen to participate.

It is not, however, the will or desire of the subject which crystallizes a configuration of facts into truth. Such would be the position of those for whom reason itself is a question of power or a question of choice. The first case, Rosen shows to be the upshot of the perceived failure of the Enlightenment, wherein "pride and confidence in the project to master nature evaporated, the light of God was extinguished, and man saw himself altogether in the shadow of the beast".³⁰⁶ Reason became an expression of the will to power and was inevitably blamed for the "destruction of man's humaneness",³⁰⁷ leading to the nihilistic impasse of an entirely self-certifying discourse, which Rosen terms either the "cosmogonical poetry" of Nietzsche, or Heideggerian "dis-covery of Being" in its absence.³⁰⁸ The second case, the choice of reason, stemming from desire, Rosen clarifies as the "certification of nonsense as the basis for the

significance of sense, and this," he writes, "is nihilism."³⁰⁹ Walter Benjamin avoids both subjective positions by appealing to *logos*. He is guided by the conviction, he says, "that each truth has its home, its ancestral palace in language, that this palace was built with the oldest *logoi*, and that to a truth thus founded the insights of the sciences will remain inferior for as long as they make do here and there in the area of language like nomads, as it were, in the conviction of the sign character of language which produces the irresponsible arbitrariness of their terminology."³¹⁰

Benjamin could be speaking about what Rosen calls the ontologies of language of Heidegger or Wittgenstein as opposed to the *logos* of Hegel. The former reify the already historicized language continuum as the Being whence things emerge, about which nothing can be said that is not tautological, or, at least, a symbolic representation of tautology. According to Rosen, "we become ontologists [therefore] merely by uttering words or by making words names: "man! star! orange! thing!".³¹¹ Ontology resembles a kind of Dadaism. Simply saying what is gives the nothingness of silence logical priority over speech, it is a "peculiarly inarticulate version of positivism".³¹² Moreover, Wittgenstein's philosophical language is so perilously close to ordinary language as to actively generate arbitrariness, since theoretical usage refers to a terminological framework in which one word is opposed to another, and so on. A word in ordinary use invokes a pragmatics of circumstance and specificity, an essentialism

antithetical to the systemic or conventional interpretation of language as continuum.³¹³ The inability of Wittgensteinian discourse to posit itself as metalanguage collapses theoretical into ordinary language into the 'language game', the result is absurdity or endless play. In their attempt to overcome Cartesian dualism ontologies of language manifest the tendency of dualism towards nihilistic monism.

Hegel makes possible the reconciliation of the particular antithesis of mathematical ratio and metaphysical speculation through a secularizing of Christian *logos* as the juncture between thinking and Being and by making Being transform itself into the history of Becoming.³¹⁴ *Logos* is at once an obstruction to the convocation of Being and time the history of Becoming might otherwise imply is an historicizing principle. Heidegger's avowed intent to destroy Western metaphysics and bypass *logos* in order to answer the absence of Being, like that of negative theology to manifest the *Deus Absconditus*,³¹⁵ is in one sense a re-sacralizing of *logos* given Hegel's claim of having carried to completion the Cartesian project to make men gods, and not altogether inconsistent with it. However, Hegel defines divinity as speculative wisdom, making it the genuine possession of the few.³¹⁶ His thinking is an affront on contemporary history, and, as Rosen puts it, "incompatible with the moral and political forces of the Enlightenment from which it sprang," because it establishes itself as a mode of salvation inaccessible to the many and, indeed, superior to those modes promised by the

state, of law and custom, work and consumption, which were progressively incorporated into the technology of the state.³¹⁷ Investment in the modes, and ways of living, offered by the egalitarian state, goes to enhance the determinism of its progress, which nihilism at worst supports and at best is ineffectual in combating. Hegelian *logos* in conjunction with Hegel's emphasis on the aristocratic and esoteric provides a means of combating not progress but the deterministic form it has come to assume in the modern state, a form partly contingent on the "acceptance of the tastes of the many by the few".³¹⁸ Baudelaire's assertion of dandyism as a new aristocracy, as "an institution outside the law", can be understood in this sense.³¹⁹ Finally, Rosen points out, "The spiritual power of Christianity is brutalized by its transformation into secular terms; the dynamo (to use Henry Adams' image) replaces God as the expression of human transcendence. But this same transference of psychic energy, the culmination of a process begun two or three centuries earlier, gives a spiritual, even religious aura to the secular power of history, the state and the interaction of political and technological flux."³²⁰ This brutalization, for Benjamin, is the complement of the barbarism we call civilization. "The secular is to be sure not a category of the Kingdom of God, but rather one of the most pertinent categories of its stealthy approach. For in profane happiness everything worldly strives for its final demise ... Nature is messianic in its eternal and total transience. The task of world politics, which must adopt nihilism as

its method, is the striving for this eternal and total transience."³²¹

Walter Benjamin thought fashion, despite its significance within his Baudelairean understanding of modernity in its eternal transience, to be an actor in an arena where the ruling class necessarily gives the commands.³²² It is the dandy who breaches this necessity. The flâneur, then, attends to fashion as it effects modernity and in the guise of the historical materialist bears witness to its dialectical interference as product and productive of history. The dandy effects fashion by interposing his body in this dialectics, as both martyr and prophet, aristocrat and revolutionary. Flânerie inspires dandyism and is, as it were, the Thinking-Principle of the Clothes-Wearing Man (Carlyle). Hence, Oscar Wilde, in "The Truth of Masks" applies the methods of archeology to a critique on the role of costume in Shakespeare's plays. He is guided by a conviction not dissimilar to Benjamin's own, nor unlike that causing historical materialism to find in the scraps and facts of history, its ephemera or outer garniture, the indications of truth. Wilde writes, "costume is a growth, an evolution, and a most important, perhaps the most important sign of the manners, customs and mode of life of each century."³²³ He who finds truth in the details that characterize an age, Wilde terms the "illusionist" or artist. "Perfect accuracy of detail, for the sake of perfect illusion, is necessary for us. What we have to see is that the details are not allowed to usurp the principal place. They must be subordinate always to the general motif of the play. But

subordination in art does not mean disregard of truth; it means conversion of fact into effect, by assigning to each detail its proper relative value."³²⁴ Further, "the aesthetic value of Shakespeare's plays does not, in the slightest degree depend on their facts, but on their Truth, and Truth is independent of facts always, inventing and selecting them at pleasure."³²⁵

Walter Benjamin and Oscar Wilde share a concern that directs their thinking for what Baudelaire called particular beauty or the beauty of circumstance, which, for the latter, links inextricably the dandy and the flâneur. To look back on the past without the present in one's mind's eye is to throw away the originality that comes from the stamp time impresses on our sensibility.³²⁶ Originality signifies in regard to Benjamin the power to originate or write history from the circumstance afforded by one's flânerie. In regard to Wilde, it signifies the dandy's prerogative to create "a personal form of originality within the external limits of social conventions".³²⁷ Baudelaire writes that fashion, the controlling, and life-, force of particular beauty, must be thought of as "a symptom of the taste for the ideal that floats on the surface in the human brain".³²⁸

Baudelaire seems to contradict the notion of amortization as an initial condition facilitating the constellation of surfaces to produce effects or for the discernment of truth. Like Wilde, he talks of fashion as evolution, growth, as if in the animal kingdom.³²⁹ To enjoy fashions we must not look upon them as dead things, he writes, "we might as

well admire a lot of old clothes hung up, limp and inert, like the skin of St. Bartholomew ... They must be pictured as full of the life and vitality of the beautiful women that wore them."³³⁰ Modernity vivifies fashions, does not eviscerate them. This is exactly the point. For amortization takes from modernity, takes particular beauty and lends it a perfection worthy of antiquity in the constellated dandy, by way of the dandy's art, art of dandyism, and analogously to the flâneur's history. This perfection, life may be said to lack, the dandy presents and this is how he is represented - "a creature perfect in externals and careless of anything below the surface."³³¹ What is his secret, the truth behind the artifice, below the surface? Can he, as Ellen Moers says, only be idealized for what he is not?³³² The case for the dandy is stated rather obliquely and untranslatably by Charles Baudelaire when he writes, "Le rien embellit ce qui est."³³³

Benjamin's explicit advocacy of political nihilism is not a nihilistic aspect of his thought, but an aspect of his thought that in full conscience and for good reason takes nihilism as its method. The point of difference is also explicable in terms of Wilde's 'truth of masks'. And the difference is fundamental to an understanding of dandyism. The fin de siècle dandy ostensibly renounces life for Art. He declares himself art. Death is implicit in this renunciation. But only in a frivolous sense - the corpse-like rigidity of the dandy. Not because it is physically possible or impossible, but because it is metaphysically necessary. A necessity spoken of by

Elias Canetti as "enantiomorphosis", which according to its etymology and as he uses the term means sociocultural prohibition on or opposition to metamorphosis.³³⁴ The dandy must affect Death, an affectation, because he is Art. It would be ludicrous to suggest that death is immanent in dandyism in the same way as it is ludicrous to suggest that the dandy is a nihilist. He is artificial and this is how art must be understood. And because he is artificial by nature, this is how nature must be understood. However, nature is the imperfect reflection of art's perfect creation, a congeries of effects art has originated. Fortunately so, otherwise "we should have had no art at all".³³⁵ The importance of the mask for the dandy is the same as the importance of the stance or attitude. The truth in these determinations exists over and against a set and within a structure of relations which are "the external limits of social conventions" (Baudelaire) or "enantiomorphic" (Canetti). From this standpoint, they are metaphysical determinations. Wilde concludes his essay, "The Truth of Masks," thus: "The essay simply represents an artistic standpoint, and in æsthetic criticism attitude is everything. For in art there is no such thing as a universal truth. A Truth in art is that whose contradictory is also true. And just as it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can apprehend the Platonic theory of ideas, so it is only in art-criticism, and through it, that we can realise Hegel's system of contraries. The truths of metaphysics are the truths of masks."³³⁶

The position of nature in regard to Art, to the mask and dandiacal costume, the position of Modernity in regard to Truth, becomes for the dandy and flâneur, the position of a physics in contradistinction to a metaphysics. That is, the difference between Nature and Art ultimately elucidates the difference between the secular and the sacred. Rosen correctly blames secularization in its culminatory phases for conferring on the state a religious "aura". For in its Benjaminian determination, aura is what does not lend itself to absorption in the mechanisms of production and reproduction of the modern state.³³⁷ The notion of aura contrasts itself with the Baudrillardian notion of Simulation as absolute reproducibility. For Baudrillard, Simulation characterizes the condition of modernity as nihilistic: ceaseless duplications destroy meaning and value. Baudrillard introduces Andy Warhol to demonstrate the point: "the multiple replicas of Marilyn's face are there to show at the same time the death of the original and the end of representation."³³⁸ However, as Andrew Ross asserts, again in a context dealing with Warhol, "It is only in theory that mass-produced culture is infinitely reproducible."³³⁹ I would add, it is only in theory that nihilism becomes a tenable, if not a necessary, proposition.

It has to do with the soul, therefore, the auratic entails a metaphysics, a certain spiritual power, for which, despite Rosen's suggestion, the secular is not a brutalization. It will be recalled Rosen talks of the spiritual power of Christianity as brutalized once put in secular terms. This may be

deemed to be precisely contingent on the condition of modernity, since, Rosen writes, "Thanks largely to the combined influence of mathematics and Christianity (in a positive and a negative sense), the good was said to lie beyond the domain of rational investigation of the world."³⁴⁰ Hence, Christian metaphysics promotes the separation of faith's greatest good from reason as ratio, of *Sophia* from *Logos*, which can only result in unhappiness.³⁴¹ But there is, obviously, happiness to be gained, in overcoming this separation, from the certitude of transient things, as Benjamin points out. Once we accept the state's, and by extension, modernity's underpinnings as purely ideological, the secular sets the stage for nihilism.³⁴² But if the alternative posed by the secular is not absolute and the modern state includes the possibility of its own "scenes of overcoming",³⁴³ then we are close to the response of the dandy.

In the person of Oscar Wilde, "the Romantic secularization of the Christian religious myth of the *logos* finds its unabashedly extreme statement."³⁴⁴ Speech, for Wilde, signifies the first principle of his artistic creativity. Linda Dowling shows how, contrary to Walter Pater's literary Aestheticism, of which Wilde appears to be the immediate legatee, the latter's privileging of speech over writing rejects Pater's conviction of the moribundity of language and of "beautiful style" as born of that moribundity, in the form of Euphuism.³⁴⁵ This conviction derived from contemporary philology in its emphasis on dead languages, winning over it, Dowling argues, a victory through acquiescence.

Pater incorporates the new philology's essential claims but voids its potential to destroy traditional cultural values: he holds true to the Coleridgean ideal of a national clerisy maintained to protect such values.³⁴⁶ This ideal was, in effect, an inoculation against the democratizing spirit that had found its way into language, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, effacing the delineations between Greek and barbarian, and that threatened to annex the demesnes of the few, the guardians of language, to the general good of the many. Language had itself become, Dowling writes, "the vehicle of cultural decay."³⁴⁷ It had been invested with the power of its own self-determination, an autonomy, I have noted, Dowling sees as radically reaffirmed in Foucault's theory of discourse and Derridean deconstruction.³⁴⁸ I have also already stated, in regard to Wittgenstein and Heidegger, how the granting to language of a being-in-itself, the ontological, results in nihilism.

As the fin de siècle approaches, popular culture comes to be seen as meriting the art-critical attentions of a generation brought up on, but increasingly at odds with, Paterian Æstheticism. Wilde retains Pater's élitism, but decisively rejects his cultural selectiveness. In so doing, Wilde dispenses with the idea of value residing only in the monuments high culture has erected to itself. He neither accepts the idea, current in the post-philological dispensation, that literary culture is necessarily moribund, nor takes this as a working-method, nor does he therefore accept that such culture is necessarily sequestered and "embalmed

as books on the shelves of libraries".³⁴⁹ The direction of critical interest towards popular culture, Dowling writes, entailed a movement, peculiar to modernism, of finding artistic complexity and "difficulty" in the erstwhile inartistic and æsthetically unproblematical.³⁵⁰ Such a movement is a gesture of a self-aggrandizing élite, bereft of the traditional option of classical scholarship to assert its authority, a gesture ending in bathos and self-parody.³⁵¹ To a large degree, she is correct: academic discourses dealing with and theoretically overdetermining popular cultural practices have in recent times proliferated. However, Linda Dowling's reading must be qualified both with reference to dandyism, the dandy's functional role as élitist, and to the level of intrication of Pater's thinking and writing in philology's nihilistic and thereby morally ineffectual interpretation of language.

Philology collapses language onto an historical continuum which, at first, for the Port-Royal school, acceded to legitimacy by claiming as its underlying structure the universality of a single grammar, before that, a single *Ursprache*. For the Neogrammarians, language becomes self-legitimizing because it obeys certain universal phonological laws. Eventually, language assumes a sort of 'molecular organicism', whereby the almost arbitrary metaphors employed to describe its vicissitudinous nature end up being determinate attributes of that nature.³⁵² In other words, the ideological, which for Walter Benjamin exists in order to call attention to the material base, takes its

place: the portrait for the thing portrayed. Hence, for Pater, the quality of a literary work rests in its design, or more accurately, in the Paterian "soul in style", "that Pater could never quite free from the sensuous materiality of language."³⁵³

Wilde's dandiacal response, rather than to try and eschew that materiality, is to find in it the indices of a personal originality by bringing it into new configurations with the voice. Using Pater as an example, Wilde has Gilbert say, in his dialogue, "The Critic as Artist," "writing has done much harm to writers."³⁵⁴ The reason he gives is that Pater's work is more often far more like a piece of mosaic than a passage of music, lacking the rhythmical life of words.³⁵⁵ This is a dandiacal response, because Wilde as dandy usurps the responsibility to arbitrate for the value of his work and, so, *is* the soul in style; whereas, Pater's 'victory' over philology and linguistic materiality entrenches the position of both by making them fundamental to his understanding of style. Pater cedes cultural responsibility by locating elsewhere, in a scholarly confraternity, in the new philology - both mutually interdependent - stylistic authority. Wilde assumes authority himself by way of dandiacal audacity. I have earlier generalized this cultural moment as the dandy's entry into the art world: the dandy himself becomes the élite, reliant only on his own good taste. Wilde has said, "To have done it was nothing, but to make people believe one had done it was a triumph."³⁵⁶

Wilde's opposition to - in particular - Pater's emphasis on moribundity as enabling a "definite

mode of composition" at first sight contradicts the notion that the dandiacal is already an amortization.³⁵⁷ But, Walter Pater, along with the theory supporting him in this view, makes language itself always already amortized, as system or continuum. It is rendered, in a sense, innately dandiacal. In view of history, the absolute hegemony of the linguistic code hides it and enables it only as a rarefaction, historicity, which is nothingness. Pater the arch-æsthete's style becomes, in the specific significance given it by Gérard Peylet, artificial. As Dowling has written of the character Flavian in Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*: he wished for language to achieve that Euphuistic ideal of artificially arresting "what is so transitive".³⁵⁸ Wilde as a writer founds his personal style on literature perfected as elaborate speech, "the secrets of life and death belong to those, and those only, whom the the sequence of time affects... It is Literature that shows us the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest."³⁵⁹

Wilde's conception of *logos* makes possible the reconciliation of the dandy's beautiful secret with the dandy's mask or costume as the latter comes to pertain to a metaphysics of history - modernity. *Logos* is at once an obstruction to the convocation of surface and secret, history or language as continuum might otherwise imply is a principle of artificiality in the sense of the instantiation of pure negativity. Artificiality, for the dandy, is a form of wit, since for him it signifies irony. Dandiacal discourse is strictly speaking constellated, a configuration inclusive of superstructural and

material elements. The truth of dandyism is the truth of masks, a factor of the dandiacal stance - or attitude. Therefore it is only a dandiacal theory would see this truth as the crystallization of nothingness - in which non-entity strikes an attitude.

VI

*foil, counterfoil,
messrs. Wilde and Gray:
a contention.*

Dorian Gray's initial reaction on discovering the picture now leers cruelly at him from the canvas is to place a rather old and elaborate screen in front of it, in order to hide it. He scans the screen curiously, "wondering if ever before it had concealed the secret of a man's life."³⁶⁰ Wilde sets much store by the manner of concealment. The screen is insufficient, Dorian realises. The picture must be left to sequester altogether away from the room to which his circle of friends has access. His eye falls on a large purple satin coverlet, found by his grandfather in a convent, that he thinks, "had perhaps served often as a pall for the dead. Now it was to hide something that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself - something that would breed horrors and yet would never die."³⁶¹

Dorian invests the picture with supreme ethical responsibility and overall power to influence him, beside which Henry's influence over him comes to seem almost innocuous. Basil might have helped him to resist these influences, which the picture would register, before they had their effect in life. And he regrets, if for a moment, the loss of Basil's love that could have saved him. For it was more than a love born of the senses. But it is a

love whose time has past for Dorian, because he did not let Basil into the secret of the picture, the advent of which is a principle annihilating the past as it makes the future inevitable and inevitably corrupt. The change in the picture has annihilated the possibility of redemption. Dorian passes behind the screen, carrying what could have been a funeral pall, his own soul calls him to judgement from the canvas. He flings the coverlet over the picture in preparation for having it carried to the top of the house and hidden forever in the old nursery, that is, in preparation for having it set in the place of his personal history.³⁶²

The complex of themes articulated around the picture prefigures and leads into that centring on the fatal book. Linda Dowling suggests the dominant characteristic of the book in its affect on Dorian is to collapse time.³⁶³ The picture substitutes itself for Dorian's past. Dorian experiences history as a continuous and stable modality, time as homogeneous and empty. Conversely, the present, upon the advent of change in the picture, upon his reading the fatal book, is completely subordinated to the onrush of the future. The flux of the present is made inaccessible to any reasonable attribution of sense or value. Reason is subordinated to sensation and Dorian's life comes to resemble tragedy since he can only gain access to its events as aspects of a determinism over which he has ceded control.³⁶⁴

This complex of themes, Wilde links implicitly with the doctrine of *Æstheticism*. Dorian perceives as a shortcoming the position he has assumed in

society of an *arbiter elegantiarum*, a maker of taste. His true task should be, he decides, "to elaborate a new scheme of life that would have its reasoned philosophy and its ordered principles, and find in the spiritualization of the senses its highest realization."³⁶⁵ Dorian's credo - the spiritualizing of the senses - epitomizes one element in Pater's *Æstheticism*, "[a] belief that all the maladies of the soul might be reached through the subtle gateways of the body."³⁶⁶ But this element in combination with the consequences of the advent of fatal book and picture, which the novel maps out, constitutes *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Richard Ellmann writes, as a critique of *Æstheticism*.³⁶⁷ The antagonism between his own and Walter Pater's artistic practices, Wilde transposes onto the novel. The action condemns Dorian as it shows the dangers inherent in the notion of style simply as a matter of style, without ramifications of a moral or metaphysical nature. Wilde demonstrates, through Dorian Gray, the dandiacal truth, "Le style c'est l'homme même."³⁶⁸

Style makes the man, not only in the reflexive sense of the dandy's self-cultivation, but also in his mode of worldly interaction. Dorian, though certainly a dandy, tends to forgo the latter and place incommensurate weight upon the former. The picture functions as replacement for the effects he produces on those around him and transforms itself into the metaphysical ground of his mode of being, into his soul.³⁶⁹ The discipline of two mirrors, thus, becomes for Dorian the discipline of the mirror and the picture: "[often] he would stand with a mirror,

in front of the portrait ... looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass."³⁷⁰ Later, the mask, the public certification of the dandy's role, will seem to him a quite private and artificial affair: the mask of youth and the mask of beauty.³⁷¹ And in his attempt to end the "monstrous soul-life" of the portrait, he will end the life to which the mask has been at most an artificial and purely physical screen.³⁷²

There could be but one explanation for the living death of the portrait - influence. Dorian's wish succeeds in achieving its object, because of the effect of thought upon dead and inorganic things. Thought can influence living beings, why should not, Dorian wonders, "things external to ourselves vibrate in unison with our passions, atom calling to atom in secret love or strange affinity?"³⁷³ Indeed, the laws of quantum physics would be impelled to agree. The patterns of influence in *Dorian Gray*, whether, as here, construed as atomic, or as poisonings and contagion (at one point, Dorian thinks some poisonous germ has "crept from body to body till it had reached his own"³⁷⁴), depend upon a plane of artificiality, from which Dorian draws his psychological and moral imperatives. For Dorian, the type of this plane having elevated itself to a final stratum of reality is the picture. The picture is that principle, therefore, whereby the attributes we ascribe to beings become retroactively determinations of those beings. As one current cultural theorist puts it, without irony, "This is Baudrillard's world of the hyperreal, and

the infinite simulacrum, the abstract compulsive innovation of signs: arbitrary but perpetual, empty but brilliant. It is Jameson's æsthetic of the euphoric hysterical sublime, the frantic schizophrenic explosion of multiple glossy surfaces without depth, the gleaming hallucinatory splendour of style without substance."³⁷⁵

Dorian's decision to be something more than a maker of taste, than a dandy, standing in what he supposes to be a cosmetic relation to the fashionable world, induces him to undertake a series of æsthetic adventures. He gives himself up to the enjoyment of the Catholic Mass, one season, another, to the doctrines of the *Darwinismus*. He studies the manufacture and affects of perfumes. He hosts concerts of barbaric ethnic musics and collects strange indigenous instruments. He studies jewels and their historical significances, embroideries and textiles. He develops a passion for acquiring ecclesiastical vestments. He exalts in the secrets of his aristocratic genealogy. He discovers in literature the pattern of his type and temperament. In the great bad figures of history, he finds his own excessive appetites mirrored. Evil becomes for him a mode of realization of the beautiful.³⁷⁶ But behind the screen of all these preoccupations, he is increasingly infatuated with and jealous of his portrait. Not lest someone should come upon it and find out this secret, but that the "wanton luxury and gorgeous splendour of his mode of life" cannot be separated from it.³⁷⁷

Wilde's method in cataloguing Dorian's excesses is to compose them of fragments, found

chiefly in South Kensington Museum Art Handbooks, and other texts.³⁷⁸ His arbitrary textual borrowings point up the equal arbitrariness of Dorian's changing tastes. Far from elaborating a reasoned philosophy with its highest realization in the senses, Dorian elaborates on the model of an unreasoning "mosaic of sins and sensations" with its highest realization in the form of evil.³⁷⁹ Dorian forsakes dandyism for nihilism and cosmetics. He forsakes style, a personal form of originality, for pride and private individualism, audacity in the public realm, for outrage and public censure.

Linda Dowling notes that Wilde's personal form of audacity, his outspokenness, leads to the same end. "Wilde's own trials and imprisonment," she writes, "were to suggest (with a certain vividness) some of the constraints on the performing self."³⁸⁰ It is as if, for her, his testimony from the docks in 1895, for which he did win applause, were a species of performance. The dandyism of the parry, however, placing its positions in opposition, is at once a use of dandyism. To view his style of defense as grounded in a lie, from which Wilde could not free himself, is to conclude that in the conviction and sentencing of Oscar Wilde justice was being done: Wilde was finally being punished for an immoral, feigning existence. Whether this so or not, in dealing with the claims of the courtroom as he did, Wilde parried not the perpetration of injustice against him, but the hypocrisy of those claims. He did not fall into the moral positivism of the court and its justice. The parry puts the dandy indirectly at risk:

Wilde was punished in the court's eyes not for the 'Love that dare not speak its name', but for the putative crime of homosexuality. Max Beerbohm writes of the trial: "Here was this man, who had been for a month in prison and loaded with insults and crushed and buffeted, perfectly self-possessed, dominating the Old Bailey with his fine presence and musical voice."³⁸¹

I have stated that Dorian Gray is a dandy. This must now be qualified. Since the antimoralism of the dandy has been misleadingly overrated, it is the beautiful secret of Dorian's conscience makes him a dandy. It constitutes ultimately his audacity, triumphing rather over the vulgarity of excess, over materialism, the nihilistically utilitarian and the narrowly cosmetic, than over dandyism. Dorian seizes the knife with which he killed Basil Hallward and, stabbing the portrait, establishes an original mode of redemption: the attributes of the picture at once become his own - he is dead. The servants on entering find a "splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of youth and beauty". On the floor is a man "withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage".³⁸² Wilde writes in his essay, "The Relation of Dress to Art": "Where there is loveliness of dress, there is no dressing up."³⁸³

VII

L'Imprévu.

A last word of definition must be appended to this study of dandyism. It is given by Barbey D'Aurevilly in the following form: "le Dandysme ... aime l'imprévu et déteste la pédanterie des vertus domestiques."³⁸⁴ Dandyism throughout its history enjoys privileged access to the unexpected, the unforeseen. With Brummell the unforeseen was virtual sartorial revolution. He advocated simplicity in dress and immaculate grooming. Where his somewhat dandiacal forebears, the courtly macaronis, adopted the louche and produced with their costume the overall effect of a calculated disarray, disporting themselves in meretricious outfits done with plumes and volumes of fabric, the Beau affected severe lines, stretch hose, spotless linen, a stiffened neck-cloth. For all his effete bachelorhood, and despite soliciting the idle and unsexual company of ladies over that of men, he was the first advocate of manliness in dress. When asked how it was done, he said, with fine cloth, and extolled the virtues of country laundering. The French dandies, including Barbey, though they prided themselves in their imitation of that peculiarly English stiffness of attitude (befitting a people who were Angles), were showier and indulged their fancies in a way that left them open to the charge of lack of taste, but perfected a dandyism of spirit and intellect quite alien to and unforeseen in Beau Brummell's purview. So that, Charles Baudelaire could write, "To sum it all up,

our strange artist expresses both the gesture and attitudes, be they solemn or grotesque, of human being and their luminous explosion in space."³⁸⁵

The dandy's detestation of bourgeois virtue would make him, for Albert Camus, a revolutionary. The dandy possessed the power to call into existence new worlds. "Understand," wrote André Gide, a contemporary of Wilde, "that there are two worlds: the one that is without one's speaking about it: it's called the real world because there's no need to talk about it in order to see it. And the other is the world of art: that's the one which has to be talked about because it would not exist otherwise."³⁸⁶ Wilde's particular area of unexpected expertise was his dandyism of the Word. Gide remarked, along with W.B. Yeats and Robert Ross, the inferiority of Wilde's written beside his spoken works.³⁸⁷ We have no such gauge, although works like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* retain a suggestion of extemporaneity and the Wildean corpus remains one of the most quotable and misquotable in English literature.

Wilde appropriated *l'imprévu* as a principle guiding his manner of style, such that his aphorisms throw an ironic light on domestic saws and the speeches of his characters reformulate in unexpected ways accepted truths. Barbey states the dandy loathes domestic virtue. This is born out in Wilde's naming the Seven Cardinal Sins, Virtues and calling consistency and habit a refuge for the dull. It has also a special significance in view of Wilde's Irishness and parody of the English at

home and possibly in regard to his homosexuality since he was rarely at home.

Wilde opens the way, with his generation - called by Yeats 'tragic', perhaps because they were premature - for the dandy to explore his vanguardest tendencies in art and for the avant-gardiste to explore the dandiacal tendencies of art. The shock of this art, culminating only a generation later, in the highs and lows of modernism, finds its preparatory and prefatory instatement in D'Aurevilly's tract on *Dandysme*: innovation and, indeed, the shock of *l'épouvante* are made decisive aspects of art and dandyism. The siege of the temples of art and Wilde's exemplary spite for the British Academy are marked with trepidation and seen, justifiably, as an attempt to *épater les bourgeois*. The dandy's sexual and political dissent from the norm can, of course, be similarly understood as elements in his strategy of opposition through innovation. But it must be kept in mind, however momentous the events contingent on dandyism may appear, the dandy's role in them is the achievement of one who is calculatedly inconsequential, in the sense that we may call him a cultural dilettante and political ingénu.

The unforeseen, the unexpected, then, takes its position within a constellation of affects, within a general strategy of dandyism which it threatens to upset. For this reason, the dandy becomes a figure elusive of specific definition and begs comparison always to a set of cultural and historical coordinates which may either make or

destroy his or her reputation as a dandy. For this reason, also, the question of the dandy's gender presents itself within a problematic that at least for Wilde, the focus of this study, occurs, but under the ægis of an alterior concern, the dandy's sexuality, with which I have maintained it is inextricably linked and by which I have suggested it is complicated. Therefore, to allude to, for example, the dandyism of Barbara Kruger's art, bears more on the thematics of art than on gender. The concept of *l'imprévu* introduces and perpetuates the potential of subversion, whether sexual, political, cultural, or dandiacal. As Barbey D'Aurevilly writes of the Beau, "Son audace était de la justesse."³⁸⁸ The audacity of dandyism is the audacity of justice.

- *fin* -

notes & references:

- ¹Title taken from J.C.Squire's "Preface" to *The Book of Bodley Head Verse*, ed. J.B. Priestly, John Lane, London, 1926, pp.vii-xiv.
- ²"Dürer was highly aware of being Dürer. Perhaps the most outspoken document of this self-consciousness and our clearest guide to his intentions is his self-portrait of 1500Here the artist does not portray himself objectively but invents an image of himself for (public) display. We do not see a record of Dürer as he was, but as he declared himself to the world. The artist in his public persona. He presents himself *imitatio Christi*, with the long centre-parted hair and in the full-face pose usually reserved for images of the Redeemer himself. But what may seem a smack of arrogance was a deeply serious protestation." Alistair Smith's introduction to *The Complete Paintings of Dürer*, Notes and catalogue by A.O. della Chiesa, Penguin Books, Auckland, 1986, p. 5. Plate is plate no. XVI from same.
- ³ Hubert Cole, *Beau Brummell*, Granada Publishers, London, 1977, p. 68.
- ⁴Barbey D'Aurevilly, *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell*, in *Oeuvres Romanesques Complètes*, Tome II, Éditions Gallimard, 1966.
- ⁵Cole, *Beau Brummell*, pp. 68-9.
- ⁶Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*, The Viking Press, New York, 1960, p. 22.
- ⁷Ibid. P. 35.

- ⁸Henceforth, all references to *Dorian Gray* are from this edition: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in *The Oxford Authors Oscar Wilde*, ed. Isobel Murray, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 144.
- ⁹Cole, *Beau Brummell*, p. 78.
- ¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 80.
- ¹¹Moers quoted in Linda Dowling's *Æstheticism and Decadence: A Selective Annotated Bibliography*, Garland Publishing, New York, 1977, entry 348.
- ¹²Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, Penguin, London, 1988, pp. 133-4.
- ¹³Moers, *The Dandy*, p. 264.
- ¹⁴Sima Godfrey, "The Dandy as Ironic Figure", in *Substance* 36, 1982, pp. 21-33.
- ¹⁵Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" in *Baudelaire: selected writings on art and artists*, trans. P.E. Charvet, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 390-437, p. 419.
- ¹⁶Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Routledge, New York, 1989, p. 138.
- ¹⁷Wilde, Preface to *Dorian Gray*, p. 48.
- ¹⁸Carter Ratcliff, "Dandyism and Abstraction in a Universe Defined by Newton", *Artforum*, December 1988, No. 4, pp. 82-90, p. 82.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 84.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 84.
- ²¹*Dorian Gray*, p. 144.
- ²²Ratcliff, "Dandyism and Abstraction", p. 83.
- ²³See respectively Ellen Moers in Linda Dowling's *Æstheticism and Decadence*, entry 348, Dowling's introduction to this last, p. vii. And her *Language and Decadence: in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, Princeton

University Press, 1986. And Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and The Victorian Public*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1986, p. 51.

- ²⁴See Ezra Pound and his critics for an example of the former, Andrew Ross's analysis in *No Respect* as a demonstration of the latter. The argument in this section draws largely from *No Respect*.
- ²⁵Ellmann in *Oscar Wilde*, Gagnier in *Idylls of the Marketplace*.
- ²⁶And, "A really well-made buttonhole is the only link between Art and Nature", Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 572.
- ²⁷D'Aurevilly, *Du Dandysme*, P. 672.
- ²⁸Gagnier, *Idylls*, pp. 83-84; Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, especially, pp. 317-319.
- ²⁹Ratcliff, "Dandyism and Abstraction", p. 84.
- ³⁰Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. 187.
- ³¹Wilde, "A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated", in Oxford Authors Edition, p.570.
- ³²Ratcliff, "Dandyism and Abstraction".
- ³³Eg. Ross, *No Respect*, pp. 167-168.
- ³⁴Gagnier, *Idylls*, ch. II.
- ³⁵in *Interview*, June, 1990, P. 150. See also, John Miller, "The Weather is Here, Wish You Were Beautiful", in *Artforum*, May 1990, No. 9, pp. 152-159.
- ³⁶Moers, *The Dandy*, p. 309.
- ³⁷Ibid., pp. 308-314.
- ³⁸quoted in *ibid.*, p. 314.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰D'Aurevilly, *Du Dandysme*, p. 703, n.

- ⁴¹Moers, *The Dandy*, P. 167-192.
- ⁴²*Dorian Gray*, p. 144.
- ⁴³Susan Sontag quoted in Ross, *No Respect*, pp. 144-145.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 145.
- ⁴⁵Sontag quoted in *ibid.*, p. 152.
- ⁴⁶Moers, *The Dandy*, pp. 167-215.
- ⁴⁷Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, *Pelham*, ed. and intro. J. McGann, Uni. of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1972.
- ⁴⁸David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988, epilogue.
- ⁴⁹Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 58.
- ⁵⁰See Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley, Vintage Books, New York, 1980.
- ⁵¹See Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man?: A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde*, Serpent's Tail, London, 1988, p. 36 & chapter II.
- ⁵²Ross, *No Respect*, p. 158.
- ⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 159.
- ⁵⁴Moers, *The Dandy*, p. 314.
- ⁵⁵Ross, *No Respect*, p. 161.
- ⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 159.
- ⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 156-65.
- ⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 159.
- ⁵⁹Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, P. 171.
- ⁶⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.
- ⁶¹Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 43.
- ⁶²*Ibid.*, p 101.
- ⁶³Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 435.
- ⁶⁴*Dorian Gray*, p. 136 and note.

- ⁶⁵For the former, Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986. For the latter, ie.. A.W. Bickerton's Wainoni Federative Home, Steven Eldred-Grigg, *Pleasure of the Flesh: Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand 1840-1915*, Reed, Wellington, 1984, p. 136.
- ⁶⁶Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, and in introduction to her bibliography, *Æstheticism and Decadence*.
- ⁶⁷Richard Ellmann's introduction to Wilde, *The Artist as Critic: The Collected Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann, W.H. Allen, London, 1970, p.xiv.
- ⁶⁸Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*, p. 86.
- ⁶⁹*Dorian Gray*, p. 50.
- ⁷⁰Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*, p. 80.
- ⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 92.
- ⁷²*Dorian Gray*, pp. 55-56.
- ⁷³Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*, p. 80.
- ⁷⁴Paul Nelson, "All the Young Dudes", in *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*, ed. J. Miller, Random House, New York , 1976, pp. 328-332, p. 330.
- ⁷⁵Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*, p. 49.
- ⁷⁶Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, p. 376.
- ⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 378.
- ⁷⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 373-4.
- ⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 377.
- ⁸⁰Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 59.
- ⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 261.
- ⁸²*Dorian Gray*, pp. 55-56.
- ⁸³Alan Bowness, *The Conditions of Success: How the Modern Artist Rises to Fame*, Thames and Hudson, Great Britain, 1989.

- ⁸⁴Moers, *The Dandy*, p. 309.
- ⁸⁵Isobel Murray's introduction to Wilde, Oxford Authors Edition, p. v.
- ⁸⁶Bartlett, *Who Was That Man?* Although Neil Bartlett's personalized account exceeds my summation.
- ⁸⁷Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 572.
- ⁸⁸Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 242.
- ⁸⁹Ibid., p. 243.
- ⁹⁰Cf. "At the same time that an author is designated, thought is subject to an image and writing is made an activity different from life, having its ends in itself ... in order better to serve ends against life." Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987, p. 25.
- ⁹¹Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 253.
- ⁹²*Dorian Gray*, p. 51.
- ⁹³Ibid., pp. 53 & 58.
- ⁹⁴Ibid., p. 56.
- ⁹⁵Ibid., p. 133.
- ⁹⁶Ibid., p. 130.
- ⁹⁷Ibid., p. 133.
- ⁹⁸Ibid., p. 51.
- ⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 58-59. Basil's confusion of ethics and aesthetics recalls what Richard Pine cites as Wilde's own "exceptional antinomianism", "in which aesthetics takes the place of ethics." Pine quotes Wilde, "It will never be so, and so I look forward to it." Richard Pine, *The Dandy and the Herald: Manners, Mind and Morals*

from Brummell to Durrell, Macmillan Press, London,
1988, p. 78.

¹⁰⁰*Dorian Gray*, p. 60.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴Pine, quotes Wilde's letters on Dorian, *The Dandy and the Herald*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁰⁵*Dorian Gray*, p. 62.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p. 63 & note.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 64-65.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹¹²Stanley Cavell, "'Postscript (1989)'", in *Critical Inquiry*,
Winter 1990, vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 248-289, p. 259.

¹¹³*Dorian Gray*, p. 64.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹¹⁵Lucy Lippard, *Ad Reinhardt*, Abrams, New York, 1981, p.
172.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 168.

¹¹⁸*Dorian Gray*, p. 64.

¹¹⁹Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the
Young", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 572.

¹²⁰Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, pp. 162-163.

¹²¹*Dorian Gray*, p. 62.

¹²²*Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

- ¹²⁶Ibid., p. 67.
- ¹²⁷Ibid., p. 68.
- ¹²⁸Ibid.
- ¹²⁹Ibid.
- ¹³⁰Ibid., p. 69.
- ¹³¹Ibid., p. 163.
- ¹³²Ibid., p. 165.
- ¹³³"For them [to discover any of the things that are] isn't a matter of the least thought or concern; their wisdom enables them to mix everything up together, yet remain pleased with themselves." Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. and notes D. Gallop, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, 101e 1-3:
- ¹³⁴Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 2nd ed., Yale University Press, London, 1987, p. 206.
- ¹³⁵For characterization of Sophists, G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1981, p. 31.
- ¹³⁶*Dorian Gray*, pp. 78-79.
- ¹³⁷Ibid., p. 83.
- ¹³⁸Ibid., p. 80.
- ¹³⁹Ibid., p. 120.
- ¹⁴⁰Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement*.
- ¹⁴¹*Dorian Gray*, p. 75.
- ¹⁴²Ibid., 90.
- ¹⁴³Ibid., p. 83.
- ¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 124.
- ¹⁴⁵Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁶Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 92.
- ¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 91.
- ¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 98-99.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., p. 101

¹⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 73-74.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁶³Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 92. The danger latent in the aesthetic sense itself, as founded in the critical faculty, might be comparable - were it not specifically founded in art-criticism - with Jean Baudrillard's notion of Simulation: "Baudrillard evokes the most disturbing possibility that capitalism has triggered a dynamic in which society begins to understand itself critically, to be sure, but only from the standpoint of the repressive system itself as it moves operationally to a "higher logical level", thus permitting detection of the simulation model which it is already leaving in its wake." Charles Levin's introduction to Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. and intro, Charles Levin, Telos Press, St. Louis, 1981, p. 28.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 86.

- ¹⁶⁸Linda Dowling shows that the Æstheticist inheritance from German aesthetic idealism, from Kant and Schiller particularly, is a literalization of idealism's emphasis on the form of the beautiful object, so that it is identified with the materiality of the object. *Language and Decadence*, p. 114.
- ¹⁶⁹Cf. Wilde, "It is proper that limitation should be placed on action. It is not proper that limitations should be placed on art. To art belong all things that are and all things that are not." In letters, *The Artist as Critic*, p. 243.
- ¹⁷⁰*Dorian Gray*, p. 86.
- ¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, p. 105.
- ¹⁷²*Ibid.*
- ¹⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 207.
- ¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 106.
- ¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 105
- ¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 107.
- ¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*
- ¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, p. 98.
- ¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 105.
- ¹⁸⁰Wilde, letters on *Dorian Gray*, in *The Artist as Critic*, pp. 237-254, pp. 240-241.
- ¹⁸¹*Dorian Gray*, p. 91.
- ¹⁸²Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 260.
- ¹⁸³Wilde quoted in Pine, *The Dandy and the Herald*, pp. 54-55.
- ¹⁸⁴*Dorian Gray*, p. 107.
- ¹⁸⁵Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. 164.
- ¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 171.
- ¹⁸⁷*Dorian Gray*, p. 109.

- 188Ibid., p. 110.
- 189Ibid., p. 89.
- 190Ibid., p. 110.
- 191Ibid., pp. 110-111.
- 192Ibid., p. 111.
- 193Ibid., p. 89.
- 194Ibid.
- 195Ibid., p. 111.
- 196Ibid., p. 112.
- 197Ibid.
- 198Ibid.
- 199Ibid., p. 129.
- 200Ibid.
- 201Ibid., p. 113.
- 202Ibid.
- 203Ibid.
- 204Ibid., p. 115.
- 205Ibid., p. 116.
- 206Ibid., p. 56.
- 207Ibid., p. 111.
- 208Wilde, letter on *Dorian Gray*, in *The Artist as Critic*, pp. 240-241. Cf. Wilde once said of his philosophical dialogues: "I can invent an imaginary antagonist and convert him when I choose by some absurdly sophistical argument." Quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 289.
- 209Ibid., p. 124.
- 210Ibid.
- 211Ibid., pp. 124-125.
- 212Ibid., p. 125. Dorian will later repeat to Basil what Henry has told him, saying that when she died, "She

passed again into the sphere of art," whence, for Dorian she had come. Ibid., p. 129.

²¹³Ibid., p. 124.

²¹⁴Teresa de Lauretis, "The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations of Representation and Gender", in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987, pp. 1-30.

²¹⁵Ibid., p. 32.

²¹⁶Ibid., pp. 31-32.

²¹⁷Ibid., p. 47. Cf. Jacqueline Rose reading Lacan: "For Lacan, masquerade is the very definition of 'femininity' precisely because it is constructed with reference to a male sign." In second introduction, Jacqueline Rose, to Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose, Macmillan Press, London, 1982, p. 43.

²¹⁸Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 260

²¹⁹de Lauretis, "The Violence of Rhetoric", p. 32.

²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹Ibid., p. 47.

²²²Ibid. Cf. A. Jardine, who connects this with modernity, "[Gynesis -] the putting into discourse of 'women' is that process diagnosed in France as intrinsic to the condition of modernity." Jardine quoted in Andrew Haase, "Body Shops: The Death of Georges Bataille", in *Body Invaders: Panic sex in America*, ed. Arthur and Marie-Louise Kroker, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1987, pp. 120-149, p. 146, n. 77.

²²³Ibid., p. 43.

²²⁴*Dorian Gray*, respectively, p. 83 and p. 124.

- ²²⁵Stanley Cavell, "'Postscript'", p. 285.
- ²²⁶Ibid., p. 277.
- ²²⁷Ibid., p. 260.
- ²²⁸Ibid., p. 256. & Stanley Rosen writes with some archness, "in the *Symposium* the students of the Sophists are united by a taste for pædarasty and the praise of techné." (Cf. Henry's sophistry and Dorian's discipleship.) *Plato's Symposium*, p. 56.
- ²²⁹Ibid.
- ²³⁰Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, pp. 274-278.
- ²³¹Ibid., pp. 106-115.
- ²³²*Dorian Gray*, p. 182.
- ²³³Ibid., p. 201.
- ²³⁴Ibid., p. 195.
- ²³⁵Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. M.H. Heim, faber and faber, London, 1985, p. 248.
- ²³⁶*Dorian Gray*, p. 145.
- ²³⁷Wilde, letters in *The Artist as Critic*, p. 247.
- ²³⁸Cf. Baudelaire: "The reader will readily understand that I could easily verify my assertions from innumerable objects other than women." "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 405.
- ²³⁹"Nihilistic arguments can often be seen to rest, at least in significant measure, on the supposition that if one of these extreme alternatives [binary options] is rejected, the only recourse is to opt for the other (one)." (My parentheses.) D.A. Crosby, *The Spectre of the Absurd: Sources and Criticisms of Modern Nihilism*, State University of New York Press, 1988, p. 364. Also Cf. Foucault's notion of "technologies of the self" as being "forms of understanding which the subject creates about himself" and ways in which individuals "affect

by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their souls." Cited in Elspeth Probyn, "The Anorexic Body", in *Body Invaders*, pp. 201-212, p. 206.

²⁴⁰*Dorian Gray*, p. 126.

²⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁴²*Ibid.*

²⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 126.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 120.

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*

²⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 127.

²⁴⁸*Ibid.*

²⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 208.

²⁵⁰Wilde, "The Disciple", in Oxford Authors Edition, p. 567.

²⁵¹Cf. Cavell, "Postscript", p. 259: "Wittgenstein's *Investigations* is not, I have found, very helpful in understanding why we are, through what mechanisms we become in philosophy, focused, fixated on telling what cannot be told, on speaking in emptiness, on saying what is untellable not because it is a secret but because it could not be a secret - like my being human. But no work of philosophy I know is better at divining that this what we do, that this is a deep aspect of our lives, something that one might imagine gives them depth, as if otherwise our depth might be taken from us." Perhaps because, Stanley Rosen writes, "[For Wittgenstein] the activity of reasoning is the immanent surface of man's yearning for truth and fulfilment: the transcendental surface is silent vision." Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*, Yale University Press, London, 1969, p. 7.

- 252 *Dorian Gray*, p. 209.
- 253 Aatas Ojala, *Æstheticism and Oscar Wilde*, pt. I, "Life and Letters", Folcroft Library Edition, 1971, p. 24.
- 254 Wilde, "A Few Maxims for the Instruction of the Over-Educated", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 571.
- 255 *Dorian Gray*, p. 154.
- 256 Howard Barker, *Arguments for a Theatre*, John Calder, London, 1989, p. 48.
- 257 Murray introduction to Wilde, Oxford Authors Edition, p. xi.
- 258 Richard le Gallienne quoted in Ojala, *Æstheticism and Oscar Wilde*, p. 51.
- 259 Murray introduction to Wilde, Oxford Authors Edition, p. xi.
- 260 Hear Michéal MacLiammóir's *I Must Be Talking To My Friends*, Argo Records, 1961, and *The Importance of Being Oscar*, Argo Records, 1966.
- 261 Cavell, "Postscript", p. 286.
- 262 Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. xiii.
- 263 *Ibid.*, p. ix.
- 264 *Dorian Gray* quoted in Dowling, *ibid.*, p. 160.
- 265 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 266 *Dorian Gray*, p. 142.
- 267 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 268 "Schopenhauer, Cioran, and others, who claim that but two states of human life exist, either deadening boredom or excruciating pain ... have fallen into what Charles Frankel calls "an operatic posture" or a case of "cosmic hypochondria"." Crosby, *The Specter of the Absurd*, p. 356.
- 269 *Dorian Gray*, p. 210.
- 270 *Ibid.*

- ²⁷¹Wilde quoted in Pine, *The Dandy and the Herald*, pp. 54-55.
- ²⁷²*Dorian Gray*, p. 52.
- ²⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 256.
- ²⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 206.
- ²⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 51.
- ²⁷⁶Wilde quoted in Pine, *The Dandy and the Herald*, pp. 54-55.
- ²⁷⁷Wilde's letters on *Dorian Gray*, in *The Artist as Critic*, pp. 240-241.
- ²⁷⁸See note 265, above.
- ²⁷⁹See for example Deleuze and Guattari on despotism, *1000 Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, pt. 2, trans. and foreword B. Massumi, The Athlone Press, London, 1987, p. 116. And this, *ibid.*, pp. 46-67, "Since the 'signifier' has been invented, things have not fallen into place. Instead of language being interpreted by us, it has set about interpreting us, and interpreting itself. Signifiante and interpretation are the two diseases of the earth, the pair of despot and priest. The signifier is always the little secret which has never stopped hanging around mummy and daddy."
- ²⁸⁰For Baudelaire, in "The Painter of Modern Life", the moralism of a scene - like that of soldiers disporting themselves - can be asserted because the scene is represented; the artist is a moralist because he makes representations of modernity, understood by Baudelaire as a "tyranny of circumstance": a sensibility expresses that circumstance in moral terms. Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", pp. 413-417.

- 281For the former view, Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986, p. 228; for the latter, Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. ix.
- 282All Peylet references, Gérard Peylet, *Les Évasions Manquées, ou les illusions de l'artifice dans la littérature <<fin de siècle>>*, Éditions Slatkine, Genève-Paris, 1986, p. 282.
- 283Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 421. Cf. Paul de Man: "The originator of this discourse [on the critique of selfhood and rhetorical analysis] is then no longer the dupe of his own wishes; he is as far beyond good and evil or, for that matter, beyond strength and weakness. His consciousness is neither happy nor unhappy, nor does he possess any power. He remains however a centre of authority to the extent that the very destructiveness of his ascetic reading testifies to the validity of his interpretation." Paul de Man quoted in Lindsay Waters's introduction to Paul de Man, *Critical Writings, 1953-1978*, p. lxiii.
- 284Michael W. Jennings, *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1987, p. 12.
- 285Hannah Arendt's introduction to Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. H. Zohn, Johnathon Cape, London, 1970, p. 47. Herein also for characterization of Benjaminian criticism and in Jennings, *Dialectical Images* and see Paul de Man's reading of Benjamin in *Critical Writings*, p. 10 ff.
- 286Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 400.
- 287Rosen, *Nihilism*, p. xvi.
- 288Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 399.

- 289Rosen, *Nihilism*, p. xvi.
- 290Ibid., p. xviii, n. 2.
- 291Arendt, introduction to Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 14.
- 292Jennings reading Gershom Sholem, in *Dialectical Images*, p. 59.
- 293Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p.413. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the war-machine, *1000 Plateaus*.
- 294Rosen, *Nihilism*, pp. 66-78.
- 295Ibid., pp. 41-42.
- 296Ibid., p. xiii.
- 297Benjamin quoted in Jennings, *Dialectical Images*, p. 17.
- 298Rosen, *Nihilism*, p. 85.
- 299Ibid., p. 97.
- 300Ibid., p. 109.
- 301Benjamin, *Illuminations*, pp. 255-266, p. 263.
- 302Ibid., p. 264.
- 303Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 404.
- 304Ibid., p. 392.
- 305Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 263.
- 306Rosen, *Nihilism*, p. 66.
- 307Ibid.
- 308Ibid., p. 81.
- 309Ibid., p. 27.
- 310Arendt quoting Benjamin in her introduction, *Illuminations*, pp. 46-47.
- 311Rosen, *Nihilism*, p. 33.
- 312Ibid., pp. 33-41.
- 313Ibid., pp. 17-18, 52-53.
- 314"Hegel makes Spinoza's pure Being, as Nothing, transform itself into the history of Becoming." Ibid., pp. 87-88.

- 315Ibid.
- 316Ibid., p. 92.
- 317Ibid.
- 318Ibid.
- 319Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 419.
- 320Rosen, *Nihilism*, p. 112.
- 321Benjamin quoted in Jennings, *Dialectical Images*, p. 59.
- 322Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 263.
- 323Wilde, "The Truth of Masks", in *The Critic as Artist*, pp. 408-432 , p. 427.
- 324Ibid., p. 425.
- 325Ibid., p. 423.
- 326Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 405.
- 327Ibid., p. 420.
- 328Ibid., p. 426.
- 329Ibid., p. 392.
- 330Ibid., 426.
- 331Moers, *The Dandy*, p. 12.
- 332Ibid., p. 13.
- 333Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 424.
- 334Elias Canetti quoted in Deleuze & Guattari, *1000 Plateaus*, p. 107.
- 335Wilde, "The Decay of Lying", Oxford Authors Edition, p. 215.
- 336Wilde, "The Truth of Masks", in *The Artist as Critic*, p. 432.
- 337Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, pp. 219-253.
- 338Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. P. Foss, P. Patton, P. Beitchman, Semiotext(e), New York, 1983, p. 136.
- 339Ross, *No Respect*, p. 166.
- 340Rosen, *Nihilism*, p. xv.

- ³⁴¹ "By the nineteenth century, the possibility of happiness for Christian and pagan alike seems to have evaporated into the silences of infinity." Ibid., p. 111.
- ³⁴² "Ideology" has already surpassed, in its revolutionary bid for the social totality, by announcing that it has nothing to lose but its *disguise*, which it is quite willing to risk. A new era dawns in which the scandal of appearances appears to function for its own sake - in which at best it may be claimed that if something lies behind the code of simulacra, its character is formally indecipherable." (My emphasis.) Levin's introduction to Baudrillard, *For a Critique...*, p. 27.
- ³⁴³ see Howard Barker, *No End of Blame: Scenes of Overcoming*, in *Howard Barker: Collected Plays*, John Calder, London, 1990, pp. 73-132. See also David Ian Rabey's discussion of same, *Howard Barker: Politics and Desire*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1989, ch. V, "New Manner for New Situation".
- ³⁴⁴ Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. 188.
- ³⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 110-111.
- ³⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. xiii.
- ³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 84.
- ³⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 237-238.
- ³⁵¹ Ibid.
- ³⁵² See, for molecular organicism, Deleuze and Guattari, *1000 Plateaus*.
- ³⁵³ Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. 169.
- ³⁵⁴ Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", in Oxford Authors Edition, p. 250.
- ³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 249.

- ³⁵⁶Wilde quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 130.
- ³⁵⁷"We in fact, have made writing a definite mode of composition, and have treated it as a form of elaborate design. The Greeks, upon the other hand, regarded writing simply as a method of chronicling. Their test was always the spoken word in its musical and metrical relations. The voice was the medium, and the ear the critic." Wilde, "The Critic as Artist", in Oxford Authors Edition, p. 249.
- ³⁵⁸Walter Pater quoted in Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. 171.
- ³⁵⁹Wilde quoted in Dowling, *ibid.*, p. 187.
- ³⁶⁰*Dorian Gray*, p. 118.
- ³⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 136.
- ³⁶²*Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.
- ³⁶³Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. 171.
- ³⁶⁴Cf. "He procured from Paris no less than nine large-paper copies of the first edition, and had them bound in different colours, so that they might suit his various moods and the changing fancies of a nature over which he seemed, at times, to have almost entirely lost control." *Dorian Gray*, p. 142.
- ³⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 144.
- ³⁶⁶Pater quoted in *ibid.*, p. 65 n.
- ³⁶⁷Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 95.
- ³⁶⁸Buffon quoted in Pine, *The Dandy and the Herald*, p. 65.
- ³⁶⁹Eg. Dorian tells Basil: "I shall show you my soul. You shall see the thing that you fancy only God can see." And reveals the picture. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
- ³⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 143.

- 371 "The mask of youth had saved him." But, "Youth had spoiled him." And, "His beauty had been to him but a mask." Ibid., pp. 196 & 212.
- 372 Ibid., p. 214.
- 373 Ibid., p. 127.
- 374 Ibid., p. 154. Also in *ibid.*: the poisonous book, p. 156; Henry's poisonous theories, p. 105.
- 375 Gail Fauschou, "Fashion and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernity", in *Body Invaders*, pp. 78-96, p. 82.
- 376 *Dorian Gray*, ch. XI, pp. 142-157.
- 377 Ibid., p. 152.
- 378 Ibid., p. 147 n., p. 148 n., p. 150 n.
- 379 Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. 171.
- 380 Ibid., p. 188.
- 381 Max Beerbohm quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, pp. 435-436.
- 382 *Dorian Gray*, p. 214.
- 383 Wilde, "The Relation of Dress to Art. A Note in Black and White on Mr. Whistler's Lecture", in *The Artist as Critic*, pp. 17-20, p. 19.
- 384 D'Aurevilly, *Du Dandysme*, p. 702.
- 385 Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", p. 409.
- 386 André Gide quoted in Dowling, *Language and Decadence*, p. 187.
- 387 Ibid., p. 186.
- 388 D'Aurevilly, *Du Dandysme*, p. 676.

works consulted:

- D'Aurevilly, Barbey, *Du Dandysme et de Georges Brummell*, in *Oeuvres Romanesques Complètes*, Tome II, Éditions Gallimard, 1966.
- Barthes, Roland, *The Fashion System*, trans. H. Ward and R. Howard, Hill and Wang, New York, 1983.
- Bartlett, Neil, *Who Was That Man?: A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde*, Serpent's Tail, London, 1988.
- Baudelaire, Charles, *Baudelaire: selected writings on art and artists*, trans. P.E. Charvet, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.
- Baudrillard, Jean, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. and intro. Charles Levin, Telos Press, St. Louis, 1981.
- Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulations*, trans. P. Foss, P. Patton, P. Beitchman, Semiotext(e), Foreign Agents series, New York, 1983.
- Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. H. Zohn, Jonathon Cape, London, 1970.
- Blau, Herbert, *The Eye of the Prey: subversions of the postmodern*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1987.
- Bowness, Alan, *The Conditions of Success: How The Modern Artist Rises to Fame*, Thames and Hudson, Great Britain, 1989.
- Brummell, George Bryan, *Male and Female Costumes: Grecian and Roman Costume From the Roman Invasion until 1882 and the Principle of Costume Applied to the Improved Dress of Present Day by Beau Brummell*, Arno Press, New York, 1978.
- Burnett, T.A.J., *The Rise and Fall of a Regency Dandy: The Life and Times of Scrope Berdmore Davies*, John Murray, London, 1981.

- Cavell, Stanley, "'Postscript (1989)'", in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, No. 2, Winter 1990.
- Cole, Hubert, *Beau Brummell*, Granada Publishing, London, 1977.
- Cooper, Emmanuel, *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986.
- Crosby, D.A., *The Specter of The Absurd: Sources and Criticisms of Modern Nihilism*, State University of New York Press, 1988.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. and foreword B. Massumi, The Athlone Press, London, 1987.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques, *The Archeology of the Frivolous: Reading Condillac*, trans. J.P. Leavey, Jr., University of Nebraska Press, London, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. G. Bennington, I. McLeod, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987.
- Dowling, Linda, *Aestheticism and Decadence: A Selective and Annotated Bibliography*, Garland Publishing, New York, 1977.
- Dowling Linda, *Language and Decadence: in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Ellmann, Richard, *Oscar Wilde*, Penguin, London, 1988.
- Felman, Shoshana, *Writing and Madness*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1985.
- Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I, trans. R. Hurley, Random House, New York, 1977.
- Foucault, Michel, *Technologies of the Self*, ed. H. Martin, H. Gutman, P.H. Hutton, Tavistock Publications, London, 1988.

- Gagnier, Regenia, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1986.
- Godfrey, Sima, "The Dandy as Ironic Figure", in *Substance* 36, 1982, pp. 21-33.
- Goudsblom, J., *Nihilism and Culture*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980.
- Greenberg, David F., *The Construction of Homosexuality*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988.
- Jahn, Wolf, *The Art of Gilbert and George: or an Aesthetic of Existence*, trans. D. Britt. Thames and Hudson, London, 1989.
- Jennings, Michael W., *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism*, Cornell University Press, New York, Ithaca, 1987.
- Kerferd, G.B., *The Sophistic Movement*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1981.
- Kroker, Marie-Louise and Arthur, *Body Invaders: Panic sex in America*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1987.
- Krupnick, Mark, intro. and ed., *Displacement: Derrida and After*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983.
- Lacan, Jacques, *Écrits*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1977.
- Lacan, Jacques and The École Freudienne, *Feminine Sexuality*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. J. Rose, Macmillan Press, London, 1982.
- Lauretis, Teresa de, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987.
- Lecercle, Jean-Jacques, *Philosophy Through the Looking Glass*, Open Court, La Salle, Illinois, 1985.
- Lemaire, Michel, *Le Dandyisme de Baudelaire à Mallarmé*, Les Presse de L'Université de Montréal, Que., 1978.
- Levin, D.M., *The Opening of Vision*, Routledge, New York, 1988.
- Lipovetsky, Gilles, *L'Empire de l'éphémère: la mode et son destin, dans les sociétés modernes*, Éditions Gallimard, 1987.

- Lippard, Lucy, *Ad Reinhardt*, Abrams, New York, 1981.
- Man, Paul de, *Critical Writings, 1953-1978*, ed. Lindsay Waters, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989.
- Miller, John, "The Weather is Here Wish You Were Beautiful", in *Artforum*, May 1990, No. 9, pp. 152-159.
- Moers, Ellen, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*, The Viking Press, New York, 1960.
- Ojala, Aatas, *Æstheticism and Oscar Wilde*, pt. 1, "Life and Letters", Folcroft Library edition, 1971.
- Peylet, Gérard, *Les Évasion Manquées: ou les illusions de l'artifice dans la littérature <<fin de siècle>>*, Éditions Slatkine, Genève-Paris, 1986.
- Pine, Richard, *The Dandy and the Herald: Manners, Mind and Morals from Brummell to Durrell*, Macmillan Press, London, 1988.
- Praz, Mario, *Neoclassicism*, trans. A. Davidson, London, Thames and Hudson, 1969.
- Ratcliff, Carter, "Dandyism and Abstraction in a Universe Defined by Newton", *Artforum*, December 1988, No. 4, pp. 82-90.
- Ratcliff, Carter, *John Singer Sargent*, Abbeville Press, New York, 1982.
- Reed, John R., *Decadent Style*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, 1985.
- Rosen, Stanley, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*, Yale University Press, London, 1969.
- Ross, Andrew, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture*, Routledge, New York, 1989.
- Stanton, D.C., *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the Honnête Homme and the Dandy in Seventeen- and Nineteen-century Literature*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980.
- Vattimo, G., *The End of Modernity: Nihilism in Post-Modern Culture*, trans. J.R. Snyder, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988.

- Warhol, Andy, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: from A to B and back again*, Pan Books, London, 1976.
- Wilde, Oscar, *The Artist as Critic: The Collected Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann, W.H. Allen, London, 1970.
- Wilde, Oscar, *Oscar Wilde*, ed. Isobel Murray, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989.